

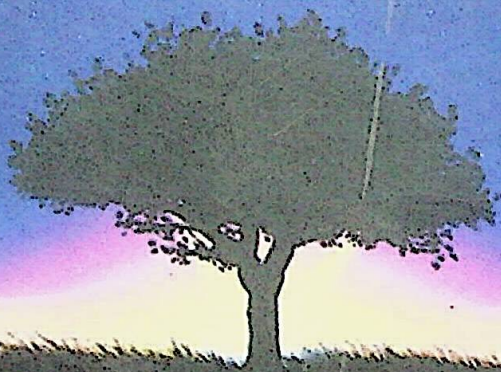
FOLLOW ME

GOD WILL LOVE YOU



MUHAMMAD

THE PROPHET FOR ALL



SYED HAMID MOHSIN

FORGOTTEN

ME



WATERFOWL

Say
O Prophet
If you love God,
follow me,
God will love you.
(Quran, 3:31)

707

10. 1. 1911

If you love God

follow me

God will love you

(John 14)

MUHAMMAD

The Prophet for All

Compiled by

SYED HAMID MOHSIN

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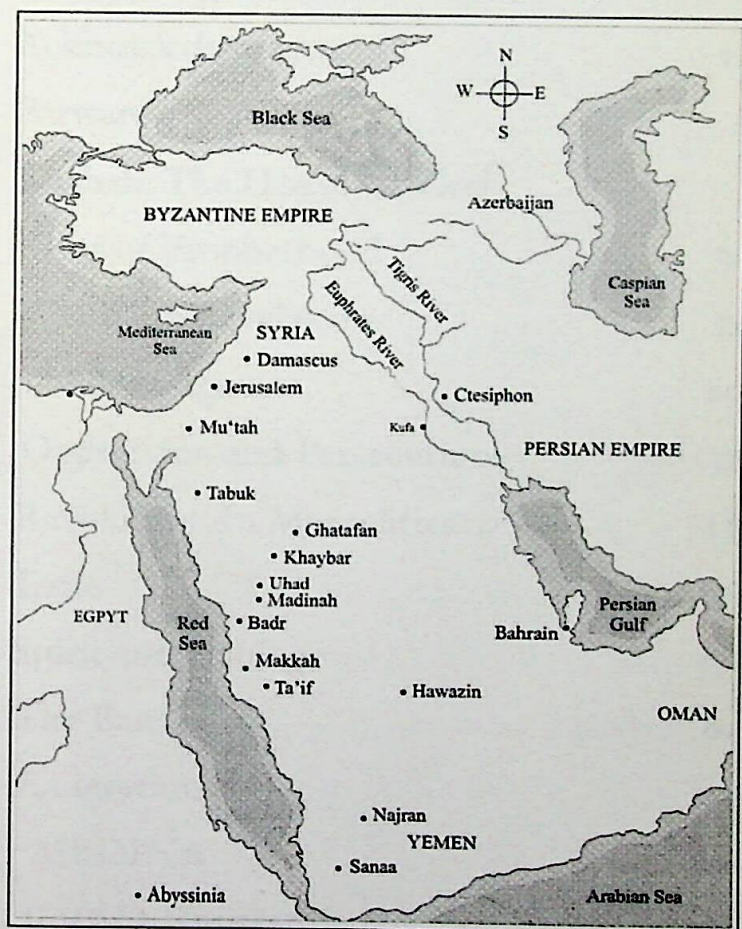
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Map of Arabian Peninsula showing at the time of
Prophet Muhammad (s), 570 - 632



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Etiquettes of reading the Names of Prophet (s) and his Companions

Saying "*Sallal Laahu Alaihi wa Sallam*" 'May Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him'.

It is obligatory on Muslims to offer *Durood* (prayers) for Prophet Muhammad (s) whenever his name is mentioned. Therefore, the supplication "*Sallal Laahu Alaihi wa Sallam*" (May Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) follows the Prophet's (s) name when it appears in books. Since the present book is addressed to a wide audience including Muslims and non-Muslims, we shall suffice by substituting "(s)" in brackets for *Durood* as the Muslim reader knows, to inwardly say *Durood* as he or she reads.

The prayers offered for the Prophet (s), reinforces the Islamic belief that Muhammad (s) is *not* God – but a human being, though leader of humanity and the final Prophet for all – he also needs the Mercy and Blessings of Allah. This is the most important implication that reminds Muslims of the Prophet's (s) position and warns them to refrain from elevating him to the status of God or equivalent to God in anywhere near Godhood. This basically safeguards the Islamic Creed, 'Oneness of God.'

Saying '*Alaihis Salaam*' (a.s) 'Peace be upon him' for the other Prophets and Angels

The Arabic expression "*Alaihis Salaam*" means "Peace Be upon Him." This is a respectful phrase said on hearing or reading the name of any Prophet. In this book, we shall suffice by substituting "a.s" in brackets for this prayer as the Muslim reader knows to inwardly say the prayers as he or she reads. Example: Prophet Ibrahim (a.s). This is also practised as per the direction of the Quranic injunction which says that Muslims should not discriminate about the status of all the Prophets.

Saying "*Razi Allahu Anhu*" (r) for Prophet Muhammad's (s) Companions

It is desirable for Muslims to offer as a mark of respect for the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (s) whenever their names are mentioned. Therefore, the prayer "*Razi Allahu Ta'ala Anhu*" (May God Be Pleased with him) follows the Companion's name when it appears in books. Here we shall suffice by substituting "r" in brackets for this prayer as the Muslim reader knows to inwardly say the prayers as he or she reads. Example: Umar (r).

Acknowledgements

It is a matter of great privilege that Almighty Allah has blessed my effort to compile a biography of His beloved messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him).

This book is intended for a large audience, both Muslim and Non-Muslims. It is rather an endeavour in bringing to high relief those aspects of his life for the benefit of the countrymen which could ensure development and salvation for the society in the contemporary world. It is my humble request that recipients of this book should go through this not as a life-history of the Prophet, but engage themselves in extracting guidance from a personality responsible for giving the history its most notable turn.

This is not an attempt to write a new biography of the Holy Prophet in conventional sense. This book is neither an outcome of any special fondness to compile yet another biography of the Prophet, nor is an attempt in venting out my understanding of the Holy Prophet's life and mission. It was during the 'Quran for All' campaign that a spark was lit in me. It set me on the mission to bring to light the life of the Prophet to the common man in the simplest of idioms.

Way back in 2008, I prepared the 'Quran for All' project. The thought of implementing it kept me restless for a while. It was my wife Shabana and daughter Sufiya who prodded me into going ahead with the project. There was no looking back. The

duo stood by me at every step and provided courage at every turn to see its successful accomplishment, May Allah reward them adequately! Needless to say that the project was to remove the veils that curtained off the truth from the eyes of the humanity.

There can be no task more exhilarating than conveying the Divine message to the countrymen. India has enjoyed exemplary communal camaraderie through the ages. It is the most valuable asset of the Indian society. Some of it could be witnessed during those sessions that were organized to popularize the message of the Holy Quran among professionals such as honorable Judges, advocates, police officers, academicians, intellectuals and students. The way these audiences honoured me in person and my efforts, served as pointers of the great reverence the co-countrymen harboured for things Divine and sacred. It is my fervent hope that Allah will honour me the same way on the Day of Judgment and deliver me at the doorsteps of eternal success.

Encouraging words from the ulema, particularly the late lamented Maulana Riyazur Rahman Rashadi, Imam City Jama Mosque Bangalore, may Almighty God bless him.

Primary manuscripts were vetted by experts such as Dr. B. Sheik Ali, former vice chancellor of Mangalore and Goa Universities and Dr. Mohammad Rafat, Professor Jamia Millia University, New Delhi. Their advices proved invaluable in further refining the work. Finally, the burden of tackling with the nitty-gritty fell with Mrs. Nigar Ataulla, journalist who expertly edited it. I express my heart-felt thanks for her. May God bless them all and accept their endeavours in completion of the work. Ameen!

I would like to thank Mr. Mohammed Numan Khan who showed steadfastness in carrying out the composing of the book. He was very ably supported by Mrs. Sadia and Mrs.

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I am sincerely thankful to all the ulema, intellectuals and authors from whose works I have benefitted in compiling this volume of biography of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). A complete bibliography is included in the book. No commercial profits are either intended or expected out of the compilation. It is merely aimed at acquainting the world of the varied facets of the life of Holy Prophet and to help them find the way to salvation.

I am also thankful to my family members, brothers, sisters; I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Mother whose constant encouragement prompted me to stay with the project. It was her grooming that has ushered us here, on this important mission, after the martyrdom of our father in the 1970s. It was her burning zeal to see us engaged in this mission of bringing the message of Islam to one and all. Her happiness is the most valuable asset I can cherish in this mortal world. It was this zeal that kept her listening to accounts of my compilation of this biography of the Holy Prophet. Finally, I thank Almighty Allah, Who bestowed the boundless energy and insight on this humble servant to fulfill this mission.

Foreword

Islamic monotheism (The belief that there is only One God) has always stood in continuity with the sacred history of Prophethood. From the beginning, the One God sent mankind Prophets and Messengers with the message, the reminder of God's presence, His commands, His Love, and His hope. From Adam (a.s), the first Prophet, to Muhammad (s), the Last Messenger, Islamic tradition recognizes and identifies with the whole cycle of Prophethood, ranging from the most famous messengers [Abraham (a.s), Noah (a.s), Moses (a.s), Jesus (a.s), etc.] to the lesser known, as well as others who remain unknown to us. The One God has forever been accompanying us, from our beginning to our end. This is the very meaning of *Tawhid* (the Oneness of God) and of the Quranic formula that refers to mankind's destiny as well as to that of each individual:

To God we belong and to Him we return.
(Quran, 2:156)

The arrival of these Prophets from God is a clear manifestation of a strong link between Heaven and the Earth, between God and man.

This book "Muhammad", 'Prophet for All' is a very humble effort to compile those dimensions of the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (s) which will enlighten readers, on how he transformed the lives of Arabs, and established peace and prosperity in the Arabian Peninsula.

By choosing Prophet Muhammad (s) to be the finality of Prophethood and the Quran to be the completion of Revelation, God had established a permanent medium of communication between Himself and man, and had erected an ever-radiating beacon of guidance and light.

Through the Quran, Almighty Allah gave Islam to Muhammad (s); but it was through Muhammad (s) that Islam spread and the Quran lives. Hence, Muhammad (s) and the Quran cannot be separated; they co-exist and their common link is God. As Muhammad (s) is made to proclaim in the Quran:

Truly, my prayers and my sacrifices, my living and my dying, is for God, the Lord of all being. I am commanded by Him, I am the first of His Muslims.

(Quran, 6:163-164)

Muhammad (s) received and transmitted the last revealed book, the Quran, which repeatedly insists on the eminent and extraordinary position of the Messenger of God, a Prophet, a bearer of news, a model, and a guide. He transformed the world in the light of the revelation and inspiration he received from God, his *Educator (Ar-Rabb)*. That he was chosen and inspired by God, and was also fully accepted by his own people is what makes Muhammad (s) an example and a guide for mankind. He occupies a special place in the life and conscience of Muslims today, just as he did in the past.

Muslims do not consider Muhammad (s), as a mediator between God and people. Each individual is invited to address God directly, and although the Messenger did sometimes pray to God on behalf of his community, he often insisted on each Muslim believer's responsibility in his or her dialogue and relationship with the One God, Almighty Allah. Muhammad (s) simply reminds mankind of God's presence: he initiates people into His knowledge and discloses the initial path of spirituality through which he teaches his companions and the

Muslim community that they must transcend, conquer the respect and love they have for him, in by worshiping and loving the One God, who begets not and is not begotten.

To those who, in his lifetime, wanted miracles and visible evidence of his Prophethood, Revelation ordered him to reply:

I am but a man like yourselves; the inspiration has come to me that your God is One God.

(Quran, 18 : 110)

You have indeed in the Messenger of God an excellent example for he who hopes in God and the Final Day, and who remembers God much.

(Quran, 33 : 21)

These Revelations also inform the Muslim believers, for all eternity, of the outstanding status of Muhammad (s) as the Messenger chosen by God.

Our attention is mainly focused, throughout the narration of the story of Prophet's (s) life, on situations, attitudes, or words that could reveal Muhammad's (s) personality and what it can teach and convey to us, guide and educate us today. When Aishah (r), his wife, was once questioned about the Prophet's (s) personality, she answered: "His character [the ethics underlying his behavior] was the Quran."

The initial idea was therefore to plunge into the heart of the Prophet's (s) life and draw out its timeless spiritual teachings.

A second type of lesson can nevertheless be drawn from the historical events that filled the Prophet's (s) life. In the seventh century, at the heart of a specific social, political and cultural environment, God's Messenger acted, reacted, and expressed himself about human beings and events in the name of his Islamic faith, in the light of his Islamic morals. Studying

his sayings, his actions in this particular historical and geographical setting should enable us to throw light on a number of principles about the relation of faith to human beings, brotherhood, love, adversity, community life, justice, laws, and war. We have therefore endeavored to approach Muhammad's (s) life from the perspective of our own times, considering how it still speaks to us and what its contemporary teachings are.

The reader whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is thus invited to look into the Prophet's (s) life and follow his steps, inspired by the facts narrated. The choice to focus on certain events is of course determined by the wish to draw out teachings that speak to our lives and to our times. In each section of the (deliberately short) chapters that make up this book, the reader will notice constant movements between Prophet Muhammad's (s) life, the Quran, and the teachings relevant to spiritual, philosophical, social, judicial, political, or cultural nature, and the present-day situation that can be drawn from the various historical situations.

Our aim is more to get to know the Prophet (s) himself: What is sought is immersion, fascination, sympathy and essentially, love. Whether one believes or not, it is not impossible to try to immerse oneself in the Prophet's (s) quest and existence and recapture the pulse and the spirit that infused his Islamic mission with meaning. This is indeed the primary ambition of this work: making the Messenger's life a mirror through which readers facing the challenges of our time can explore their hearts and minds and achieve an understanding and meaning of broader ethical and social concerns.

This book is intended for a large audience, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The sequence of events, interwoven with reflections and meditations, is easy to follow and endeavors to convey Islam's spiritual and universal teachings. The Messenger's historical experience is clearly the privileged way to grasp the

eternal principles shared by more than 1.7 billion Muslims throughout the world. This book is thus a living introduction to Islam.

Prophet Muhammad's (s) companions loved him and drew their spiritual energy from his presence among them. Prophet (s) taught them to constantly deepen that love: "*None of you believes [perfectly, completely] until I am dearer to him than his father, his son, and all humankind. [Hadith]*" They had to carry on their spiritual and loving quest, love the Prophet, and love one another and God, while the Prophet (s) himself was reminded that such communion and unity was beyond his own human power:

Not if you had spent all that is in the earth, could you have put affection between their hearts, but God has put affection between their hearts.

(Quran, 8 : 63)

Prophet Muhammad (s) was the example, the model, who lived among them and offered his love to them all, to the poor, to the old; he showed courteous regard for women and was attentive to children. He was a grandfather and would carry his grandchildren while praying in the mosque, thus conveying through his daily examples that one cannot remember and be close to God without generosity and human attention.

The Messenger taught his companions and the Muslim community to love God, and the Quran says:

Say [O Messenger]: 'If you love God. Follow me: God will love you.' (Quran, 3 : 31)

Muslims make every effort to follow the Prophet's (s) example, driven by a love for him that itself was manifested by the intensity of their love for God. This love was such that when the honorable companion, Umar (r) heard of the Prophet's (s)

death; he threatened to kill whoever dared claim that the Prophet (s) was dead: he had only been raised to heaven and would assuredly come back. Another of Muhammad's (s) companions, Abu Bakr (r), asked Umar (r) to be quiet, and declared: "O you people, let those who worshipped Muhammad (s) know that Muhammad (s) is now dead! As for those who worshipped God, let them know that God is alive and does not die." Then he recited the following verse:

Muhammad is no more than a messenger; many were the messengers who passed away before him. If he died or was killed, will you then turn back? If any did turn back, not the least harm will he do to God. But God will reward the thankful. (Quran, 3:144)

Those words forcefully recall the humane side of the Prophet's (s) life, but in no way reduce the infinite love and deep respect Muslims have continued to show towards the Prophet (s) through the ages.


This love finds expression in the permanent remembrance of the Prophet's (s) life in their hearts and memories, and in the human and moral requirement to follow his example in their daily life, constantly offering prayers for him with all their heart and love:

God and His angels send blessing on the Prophet, O you who believe! Send blessings on him, and salute him with all respect. (Quran, 33 : 56)

This book endeavors to fulfill this requirement with love and knowledge. Muhammad's (s) life is an invitation to spirituality and teaches us – in the course of events, trials, hardship, and our quest – that the true answers to existing, current questions are more often those given by the heart than by the intelligence. Deeply; simply: he who cannot love cannot understand.

Muhammad (s) is the master whose teachings one studies, the guide one follows on the way, the model one wishes to emulate, and, above all, the elect whose sayings, silences, and actions one is invited to ponder upon and follow.

We have presented the facts after intense research and study. May Almighty Allah accept our humble work and forgive us if there are any errors.



I

Kaabah

The House Of God

According to Islamic tradition, the House of God (*Kaabah*) had been built by Prophet Abraham (a.s) and his son Prophet Ishmael (a.s) in the name of pure monotheism, for the worship of the One God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the God of mankind and of all the Prophets. Centuries past by and Makkah became a place of pilgrimage, and an important marketplace and a trading center, giving rise to extensive cultural and religious blending. After some time, worship of the One God gave way to the cult of tribal or local idols, to multi-form polytheism. Islamic tradition reports that when the revelation of the Quran began, more than 360 idols, images or statues were housed and worshipped in the *Kaabah*.

Only a small group of believers remained attached to the worship of the One God and refused to join in the general idol worship. They were called the *Hunafa* and identified with the Abrahamic monotheistic tradition, (Meaning "Pure," "Following a faithful.") The Quran qualifies Prophet Abraham (a.s) and the nature of his worship as pure (*hanif*):

Who can profess a better religion than one who submits his whole self to God, does good, and follows the way of Abraham, pure monotheism [or the pure monotheist]? For God chose Abraham as a beloved friend. (Quran, 4 : 125)

The Birth

Muhammad (s) the Prophet of God was born on a Monday 20th April 570 C.E., in one of Makka's noble families, Banu Hashim, which enjoyed great respect among all the clans in and around Makkah. This noble descent was combined with a particularly painful and unbearable personal history. His mother, Aminah (r), was only two months pregnant when his father, Abdullah died during a trip to Yathrib, north of Makkah. Fatherless at birth, young Muhammad (s) was to live with the tension of the dual status implied in Makkah by a respectable descent, on one hand, and the instability of having no father, on the other.

The name Muhammad (*The meaning of Muhammad is "he who is often praised" or "he who is worthy of praise."*), quite unknown at the time in the Arabian Peninsula, came to his mother in a vision while she was still pregnant. This same vision is also said to have announced to her the birth of the "master of the people" according to the vision, when he was born, she was to say the words, "I place him under the protection of the One God [*al-Wahid*] against the treachery of the envious." Torn between her grief at her husband's death and the joy of welcoming her child, Aminah (r) said repeatedly that strange signs had accompanied the gestation, then the extraordinarily easy birth of her child.

The Desert

For four years, Muhammad (s) as orphan was looked after by a wet-nurse Halimah (r) and lived with the Banu Sa'ad Bedouins in the Arabian Desert. (In Makkah, it was customary to entrust infants to wet nurses belonging to the nomadic Bedouin tribes living in the nearby desert.) He shared a nomad's life in the most barren and difficult natural environment, surrounded, as far as the eye could see, with horizons bringing to mind the fragility of the human being and the urge to meditate. Although he did not yet know it, Muhammad (s) was going through the first trials designed for him by the One God, Allah, who had chosen him as a Prophet and was, his Educator, his *Rabb* (the Arabic word *Rabb* is often translated as "Lord").

The Quran would later recall his particular situation as an orphan as well as the spiritual teachings associated with the experience of life in the desert:

*Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter?
And He found you wandering, and He gave you
guidance. And He found you in need, and made you
independent. Therefore [for that reason], do not
treat the orphan with harshness, nor chide him who
asks. But the bounty of your lord, proclaim.*
(Quran, 93 : 6-11)

These verses of the Quran carry several teachings: being both an orphan and poor was actually an initiatory state for the future Messenger of God, for at least two reasons. The first teaching is obviously the vulnerability and humility he must naturally have felt from his earliest childhood. This state was

intensified when his mother Aminah (r), died when Muhammad (s) was six. This left him utterly dependent on God, but also close to the most destitute among people. The Quran reminds him that he must never forget this throughout his life and particularly during his Prophetic mission. He was orphaned and poor, and for that reason he is reminded and ordered never to forsake the underprivileged and the needy. Considering the exemplary nature of the Prophetic experience, the second spiritual teaching from these verses is valid for each human being: never to forget one's past, one's trials, one's environment and origin, and to turn one's experience into positive teaching for one self and for others. Muhammad's (s) past, the One God Almighty Allah reminds him, is a school from which he must draw useful, practical, and concrete knowledge to benefit those whose lives and hardships he has shared, since he knows from his own experience, better than anyone else, what they feel and endure.

Education through Nature

Life in the desert was to fashion the man and his outlook on creation and the elements of the universe. When Muhammad (s) came to the desert, he was able to learn from the Bedouins' rich oral tradition and their fame as speakers to develop his own mastery of the spoken language. Later on, the last Prophet (s) was to stand out through the strength of his words, his fluency, and above all his ability to convey the deep and universal teachings of Islam through short, pithy phrases.

In the first years of Muhammad's (s) life, he developed a specific relationship with nature that remained constant throughout his mission. The universe is loaded with signs that recall the presence of the Creator, and the desert, more than

anything else, opens the human mind to observation, meditation, and introduction into meaning. Thus, many verses of the Quran mention the book of creation and its teachings. The desert, apparently devoid of life, repeatedly shows and proves to the watchful consciousness, the reality of the miracle of the return to life:

The Quran Says:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of humankind; in the rain that God sends down from the skies, and the life which He then gives to the earth after it had been lifeless; in the beasts of all kind that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between the sky and the earth; [here] indeed are signs for a people who are wise.

(Quran, 2 : 164)

The first years of Muhammad's (s) life undoubtedly fashioned his outlook, preparing him to understand the signs in the universe.

Many years later, when the Prophet (s) was in Medina, facing conflict and wars, a Revelation in the middle of the night turned his gaze towards another horizon of meaning:

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are Signs for people of understanding. (Quran, 3 : 190)

It has been reported that Muhammad (s) wept all night long when this verse was revealed to him. At dawn, when Bilal, the muezzin (one who calls for Prayer), coming to call for prayer, asked about the cause of those tears, Muhammad (s) explained

to him the meaning of his sadness and added: "Woe to anyone who hears that verse and does not ponder upon it!"

The Orphan and His Educator

Now back in Makkah, young Muhammad (s) stayed with his mother Aminah (r) for two years. When he was six, she wanted her son to get acquainted with members of her family who lived in Medina. They went there, but on the way back, Aminah (r) fell ill and died at Abwa, where she was buried. Now fatherless and motherless, Muhammad (s) was surrounded by signs of his election as well as by grief, suffering, and death. Barakah, who had traveled with them as Aminah's (r) servant, took the child back to Makkah. His grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, immediately took him into his care. He was constantly to show deep love and particular respect for his grandson. However, he also died two years later.

Muhammad's (s) story is a difficult one, as is emphasized by the repetition in this verse from the Quran,

*So verily, with every difficulty there is relief. Verily,
with every difficulty there is relief. (Quran 94 : 5-6)*

At the age of eight, young Muhammad (s) had experienced a life of poverty, solitude, and the death of his mother and then of his grandfather. Yet all along his path he continually encountered signs of a destiny that, through people and circumstance, accompanied and facilitated his evolution and education. On his deathbed, Abdul Muttalib asked his son Abu Talib, Muhammad's (s) uncle, to look after him. Abu Talib carried out this mission as a father would have done for his own child. Later, the Prophet constantly recalled how much his uncle and his uncle's wife, Fatimah (r), daughter of Assad had loved

and taken care of him. *"Verily, with every difficulty there is relief."*

Throughout the hardships of his life, young Muhammad (s) of course remained under the protection of the One God, his *Rabb*, and his Educator. In Makkah, traditions report that he was persistently protected from idol worship and the festivals, feasts, or weddings where drunkenness and lack of restraint prevailed. One evening, he heard that a wedding was to be celebrated in Makkah and he wanted to attend. On the way there, he reported, he suddenly felt tired; he lay down to rest and fell asleep. The next morning, the heat of the sun woke him from his deep slumber. This seemingly trivial story is nevertheless most revealing as to the methods used by the Prophet's Educator to prevent His future Messenger from being tempted into lack of restraint and drunkenness. The God, always present at his side, literally put him to sleep, thus protecting him from his own instincts and not allowing His heart to develop a sense of wrongdoing, guilt, or any such moral torment as a result of an attraction that was, after all, natural for a boy of his age.

In the ensuing years, young Muhammad became a shepherd to earn his living, looking after flocks on the outskirts of Makkah. He later mentioned this experience to his Companions, portraying it as a common feature characteristic of Prophets: "there was no Prophet who was not a shepherd." He was asked: And you too, Messenger of God? He answered: 'And myself as well.'

As a shepherd, young Muhammad learnt solitude, patience, contemplation, and watchfulness. Such qualities were necessary for all Prophets to carry out their mission among their people.

From his childhood, as we have seen, Muhammad was to be accompanied by signs and trials that educated and

watching for signs of this.

When Bahirah saw the caravan approaching, he noticed that a cloud was accompanying the group and shielding them from the heat.

Determined to learn more, Bahirah decided to invite all the travelers to partake of a meal. After carefully observing each member of the group, he fixed his gaze on young Muhammad (s). He took Muhammad (s) aside, and asked him a number of questions about his family situation, his social position, his dreams, and so on. He finally asked if he could have a look at his back, and young Muhammad (s) agreed. Between the boy's two shoulder blades, the monk noticed a skin growth identified by his books as "The seal of Prophethood". He recognized in Muhammad (s), the signs of Prophethood and knew at once that this boy would become the last Prophet.

The Christian monk Bahirah asked Abu Talib, "In what way you are related to this child?" he said, "He is my son." Bahirah said "It cannot be. His father could not be alive." Then Abu Talib informed him that his father was no longer alive.

The monk Bahirah said, "He is the Master of all humans; God will send him with a message, which will be the mercy to all beings." Abu Talib was surprised and asked "How do you know that?" Bahirah replied, "When you appeared from the direction of Aqabah, all stones and trees themselves prostrated, which they never do except to a Prophet. I can recognize him also by the seal of Prophethood which is below his shoulder, like an apple". Bahirah advised him to return with his nephew immediately and protect him from enemies. He said, "By God, if he is recognized, he will surely be harmed." Abu Talib obeyed and sent him back to Makkah.

The Pact of the Righteous

Abdullah, son of Judan, the chief of the Taym tribe and a member of one of the two great alliances of Makkan tribes (known as the People of the Perfume), decided to invite to his home all those who wanted to put an end to the conflicts and establish a pact of honor and justice that would bind the tribes beyond alliances based merely on tribal, political or commercial interest.

Chiefs and members of numerous tribes thus pledged that it was their collective duty to intervene in conflicts and side with the oppressed against the oppressors, whoever they might be and whatever alliances might link them to other tribes. This alliance, known as *Hilfal-Fudul* (the Pact of the Righteous), was special, in that it placed respect for the principles of justice and support of the oppressed above all other considerations of kinship or power. Young Muhammad (s), like Abu Bakr (r), who was to become his lifelong friend, took part in that historic meeting.

Long after the revelation of the Quran had begun, Muhammad (s) was to remember the terms of that pact and say:

"I was present in Abdullah, son of Judan's house when a pact was concluded, so excellent that I would not exchange my part in it even for a herd of red camels; and if now, in Islam, I was asked to take part in it, I would be glad to accept."

Not only did the Prophet (s) stress the excellence of the terms of the pact as opposed to the misused tribal alliances prevailing at the time, but he added that even as the bearer of

the message of Islam – even as a Muslim – he still accepted its substance and would not hesitate to participate again.

Again, the key point is that Muhammad (s) clearly acknowledges the validity of adhering to principles of justice and defending the oppressed, regardless of whether supporters for those principles come from inside Islam or outside it.

The Truthful

Muhammad's life itself, before and after the beginning of revelation of the Quran, illustrates the relevance of the above analysis: the recognition of his moral qualities preceded his Prophetic mission, which confirmed a law for the need for such qualities.

After being a shepherd, young Muhammad (s) became a trader and built a reputation for honesty and efficiency, acknowledged all over the area.

When Muhammad (s) entered his adulthood, God Himself was protecting him from the widespread evils of the period of ignorance. He lived a very simple life and hated vanity and pride. He was compassionate to the poor, orphans and widows and shared their sufferings by helping them. He had the reputation of honesty, good morals, a gentle nature and sincerity.

He avoided all vices such as gambling, drinking wine and indecency. He always kept himself aloof from quarrels and neither used foul language nor abused anyone. He was well-known as *As-Sadiq* (the truthful one).

The Trustworthy

As a caravan merchant leader, Muhammad acquired a new name: *Al-Ameen*, the trustworthy one. The same root, incidentally, gives the English word *ameen*, often used at the end of prayers, an expression of hearty approval. Everyone in Makkah rich and poor alike, men and women, used to keep their cash and valuables as safe deposits at Muhammad's (s) house. It was Muhammad's (s) reliability and scrupulous honesty in this role that earned him his reputation for being trustworthiness.

He was always trusted as a mediator between two conflicting parties. Abu Talib's son Ali (r) said, "All those who came close to him loved him."

Marriage

One of the wealthiest traders in Makkah was a woman called Khadijah (r), a widow. She was cousin of a Christian monk Waraqah. She had been hearing of a young man, Muhammad (s) who was "honest, fair, and efficient," and eventually decided to test him. She asked him through her representative to take some goods of hers to Syria and sell them there. She promised to double his commission if he was successful. Muhammad (s) accepted and set out with Maysarah, a servant of Khadijah (r). In Syria, Muhammad (s) managed a commercial operation that more than doubled Khadijah's (r) expectations.

After the return of the caravan, Khadijah (r) silently listened to Maysarah's report, carefully observing the appearance and behavior of the young man who was now about twenty five. Maysarah told her that all along the journey, he had noticed a

series of signs – in Muhammad's (s) attitude and behavior – attesting that he was like no other man. Khadijah (r) then asked one of her friends, Nufaysah, to approach Muhammad (s) and ask whether he would be interested in marriage.

Muhammad (s) told Nufaysah that he could not afford marriage. She mentioned the name of Khadijah (r) with whom he would find "nobility, lineage, beauty and wealth," Muhammad (s) responded that he was interested, but that because of his status, he could not contemplate such a union. Nufaysah suggested he leave things to her, that she could arrange the match. She then informed Khadijah (r), of Muhammad's (s) favorable frame of mind. Khadijah (r) invited Muhammad (s) to her home and a proposal of marriage was made, which he accepted. Their relatives and clans agreed to the marriage.

Traditions report that Khadijah (r) was forty years old when they married, the firstborn, a boy named Qasim, lived for only two years; then came Zaynab (r), Ruqayyah (r), Ume Kulsum (r), Fatimah (r), and at last Abdullah, who also died before he reached the age of two. During those years, the Prophet (s) decided to free and adopt as his son, his slave Zayd, son of Haris, gifted to him by his wife a few years earlier. Later, when his own son Abdullah died, he sought to help his uncle Abu Talib – in great financial difficulty and burdened with a very large family – by taking his young cousin, Ali (r) son of Abu Talib into his home. Ali (r) was later to marry Muhammad's (s) youngest daughter Fatimah (r).

Adopted Son

The story of Zayd (r), the adopted son, is interesting for many reasons. Captured during a battle, he had been sold several times before becoming Khadijah's (r) slave, then Muhammad's (s). He

remained in the Prophet's (s) service for several years.

On hearing Zayd was there, his father and uncle decided to bring him back to his tribe. They heard he was at Muhammad's (s) house and came to him proposing to buy Zayd (r) back. Muhammad (s) in turn suggested they should let Zayd (r) choose for himself: if he decided to go back with his father and uncle, he would let him go without asking for any compensation, but if on the contrary Zayd (r) wanted to stay with his master, his relatives would have to accept his choice. They agreed and they went together to ask Zayd (r) what he wanted. He decided to stay with his master, and explained to his relatives that he preferred slavery with Muhammad (s) to freedom away from him.

He therefore remained with his master, who immediately freed him and announced publicly that Zayd (r) was now to be considered as his son, that he would be called Zayd ibn Muhammad (s) (Zayd, son of Muhammad), and that he would inherit from him, he was to bear that name until Revelation commanded that all adoptive children keep their family names when known. (Pls see Quran 33:45)

This story – Zayd's (r) choice, while still a slave, of his master over his father – adds another dimension to the portrait of Muhammad (s) that is gradually emerging, and it tells a lot about Muhammad's (s) personality before commencement of revelation of Quran. Simple, meditative, and courteous, but also honest and efficient in business, he expressed constant respect towards all women, men, and children, who in turn showed him gratitude and deep love. He was *as-Sadiq*, a man of truth and his word; he was *al-Ameen*, a trustworthy and dignified person; he had been surrounded with signs announcing his fate; he was rich with extraordinary human qualities that already pointed to his marvel and spectacle.

Evil Deeds

The world before Muhammad (s) became the Prophet was characterised by tribal feuds for gaining superiority, quarrels, shedding of blood on petty matters, vice, barbarism and superstition.

There was no respect for human beings particularly for weaker sections and the weaker sex. Women were considered commodities to be used for the pleasure of men. The birth of a girl was the subject of embarrassment and she was buried alive by the father himself.

In the Quran, Almighty God says:

And when the good news is given to any of them of a daughter, His face turns dark and he is filled with grief. (Quran, 16 : 58)

Killing and plundering presented a major problem in ancient Arabia. Oppression and violence spread in every nook and corner. Thus, humanity was engrossed in darkness and ignorance, gasping in agony and groaning under torture, injustice, depravity and decadence.

The Quran describes the above evils as:

Evil (sins and disobedience of God, etc.) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds, etc.) (Quran, 30 : 41)

Sharp Intelligence

Another event shows Muhammad's sharp intelligence, which he used in the service of respect and peace among the people and among the clans.

The Quraysh decided to rebuild the Kaabah, after a sudden flood had shaken its foundations and cracked its walls. The old structure was pulled down to the foundations. They rebuilt it until they reached the place, where the Black Stone (Black Stone is a Muslim relic, which according to Islamic tradition dates back to the time of Adam (a.s) and Eve (a.s), it is the eastern cornerstone of the Kaabah, called *Hajr-e-Aswad*) was to be placed, in the east corner of the Kaabah. At that point, bitter quarrels broke out among members of the different clans over who would have the honor of putting the Black Stone back in its place. Some were nearly ready to take up arms in order to determine to which clan the privilege would fall.

An old man among them suggested that the first man, who entered the sacred place the next morning, be asked to judge the issue, and a consensus was formed on that idea.

Muhammad (s) was the first to enter the sacred space, and clan elders were happy that chance had chosen him to arbitrate the dispute. He listened to them, and then asked for a cloth. He placed the black stone on it and asked the chiefs of each clan to hold the cloth's edges and lift the stone together. Once they had lifted it to the desired height, he himself placed the black stone in the required space – to the satisfaction of all, since nobody had been wronged.

This spontaneous intelligence of Muhammad (s) had immediately managed to reconcile the pride of each clan. Later, during his mission, this characteristic feature of his mind was to be often illustrated by his ability to maintain the first Muslim community's unity despite the presence of very strong personalities with widely differing temperaments.

In the quest for peace, he constantly strove to achieve again what he had done in this difficult situation between the Quraysh clans: teach the heart not to give way to proud emotions and arrogant thinking; bring the mind to heart-soothing solutions that make it possible to control oneself gently and wisely. In the years before revelation, the Messenger's Educator, Almighty God had granted him this particular quality, an alliance between a deep heart and a penetrating spirit, of knowing how to be reasonable in all circumstances, with oneself and among other people.

By the time Muhammad (s) was thirty-five, he had built such a reputation for himself that many among the Banu Hashim tribe thought that he would soon take up the mantle of his forefathers and restore the greatness of his clan by becoming its leader.

With his marriage, his own activities, and his personal qualities, he became politically and financially prominent, and he began to receive marriage proposals for his daughters, as for instance from his uncle Abu Lahab, who wished to marry his two sons, Utbah and Uthbah, to Ruqayyah (r) and Ume Kulsum (r). Clan ties were woven in the expectation of the benefits that would grow, should Muhammad (s) become clan chief.

The Quest for Truth

Muhammad himself, however, was not concerned with such matters and showed little interest in public affairs. During this time, he started to spend periods of retreat in one of the caves near Makkah. When the month of *Ramadan* came, he would go to the cave of Hira with some supplies and remain in isolation, returning periodically for additional food, for a period of about a month.

To reach that cave, he had to climb up a small mountain and go to the other side of a small peak, following a narrow path. The cave itself was totally isolated and so small that it would have been difficult for even two people to be there together. From the mouth of the cave, one could see the Kaabah far below and, a greater distance away, the barren plain stretching out as far as the eye could see.

Away from other people, amidst nature, Muhammad (s) was searching for peace and meaning. He had never taken part in idol worship, had not shared the beliefs and rites of the region's tribes, and had remained aloof from superstition and injustice. He had been protected from false gods, whether it be the worship of statues or the worship of power and riches.

For some time already, he had been telling his wife, Khadijah (r), about some dreams that turned out to be true and which troubled him because of the strong impression they left when he woke up. It was indeed a quest for truth; dissatisfied with the answers offered by those around him, driven by the intimate conviction that he must search further, he decided to isolate himself in contemplation. He was nearing forty and had reached a point in his spiritual development that made deep introspection the necessary next step.

Alone with himself, in the cave of Hira, he meditated on the meaning of his life, his presence on earth, and the signs that had accompanied him throughout his life. The spaces stretching out all around him must have reminded him of the horizons of his childhood in the desert, with the difference now that maturity had filled them with many fundamental questions.

Muhammad was searching, and this spiritual quest was naturally leading him towards the calling and signs that were pointed to him throughout life. The signs had protected and calmed him, the vision that first appeared in dreams and then came to pass in waking life, and the question asked by the mind and heart allied to the horizons offered by nature, were leading Muhammad (s) to the supreme introduction into the meaning, to the encounter with his Educator, the One God. At the age of forty, the first cycle of his life had just come to an end.

It was when he was approaching the cave of Hira during the month of *Ramadan* in the year 610 C.E., that he first heard a voice calling and greeting him;

“*As-salamu alayka, ya rasul Allah !*”

‘Peace be upon you, Messenger of God!’



The First Revelation

Alone in the cave of Hira, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) continued to search for truth and meaning. Then the Angel Gabriel (a.s) suddenly appeared to him on Monday, *Ramadan* 21 at night, that is, August 10, 610 C.E., and ordered: "Read!" Muhammad (s) answered "I am not of those who read". The Angel Gabriel (a.s) held him so tightly that he could hardly bear it and again ordered: "Read!" Muhammad (s) repeated "I am not of those who read!" The angel held him tightly again, almost choking him and repeated the order for the third time: "Read!" The same answer was repeated "I am not of those who read!" The Angel, maintaining his hold, recited:

*Read in the name of your Lord [Rabb, "Educator"],
who created humankind out of a clinging clot. Read,
and your Lord is most bountiful, He who taught by
means of the pen, taught humankind that which
they did not know. (Quran, 96: 1-5)*

Those words were the first verses of the Quran revealed to Muhammad (s) through the Angel Gabriel (a.s).

After speaking these words, the Angel Gabriel (a.s) went away, leaving Muhammad (s) in a deeply troubled state.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to go back to his wife. He eventually arrived in great distress and said: "Cover me! Cover me!" Khadijah (r) wrapped him in a cloak and asked what the matter was. Prophet Muhammad (s) explained what had happened and expressed his fear: "What is happening to me? I fear for myself". Khadijah (r) comforted him and whispered: "You have nothing to fear. Have rest and calm down. God will not let you suffer any humiliation, because you are kind to your kinsfolk, you speak the truth, you help those in need, you are generous to your guests, and you support every just cause".

Waraqah, the Monk

Khadijah (r) thought of seeking the opinion of her cousin, the Christian monk Waraqah. She went to him and told him of Muhammad's (s) experience. Waraqah recognized the signs he had been waiting for and answered without hesitation: "By He who holds Waraqah's soul, it is the sublime Namus [the friend of the secrets of Supreme Royalty, the angel bringing the sacred Revelation] who has come to Muhammad (s); the same who had come to Prophet Moses (a.s). Indeed Muhammad (s) is the Prophet of this people".

Later, during an encounter with Muhammad (s) near the Kaabah, Waraqah was to add: "You will certainly be called a liar, ill treated, banished, and attacked. If I am still alive then, God knows I will support you to bring His cause to victory!" Aishah (r) reports that Waraqah also said: "Your people will turn you away!" This shocked the Prophet (s), and he asked, "Will they turn me away?". Waraqah warned him: "Indeed they will! No man has ever brought what you have brought and not been treated as an enemy!"

The Prophet's (s) mission had only just begun, and already he was allowed to grasp some of the fundamentals of the final revelation as well as some of the truths that had been presented throughout history by prophecies among people.

Khadijah (r) understood this, and became the strongest helper and supporter to Muhammad (s).

The Message

During the time of the Prophet, the message of Islam was revealed to him in a series of revelations. These revelations were the foundation of the Islamic faith, and the Prophet was the first to receive them. The message of Islam was revealed to him in a series of revelations, and he was the first to receive them. The message of Islam was revealed to him in a series of revelations, and he was the first to receive them. The message of Islam was revealed to him in a series of revelations, and he was the first to receive them.

Acceptance of the Message

After the Prophet received the message of Islam, he began to preach it to the people of Mecca. He was the first to accept the message, and he was the first to preach it. He was the first to accept the message, and he was the first to preach it. He was the first to accept the message, and he was the first to preach it.

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3

The Message

During the initial years of revelation, the Quranic message had gradually taken shape around four main axes: the Oneness of God, the status of the Quran, prayer, and life after death. The first Muslims were called to a profound and radical spiritual conversion, and this had been well understood by opponents within their own clans who feared the considerable upheavals the new religion Islam, was bound to bring about in the beliefs and organization of their society.

Acceptance of the Message

Khadijah (r) was the first to accept Islam, and throughout the first ten years of Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) mission, she remained at his side, as an unfailingly faithful companion.

After Khadijah (r), initially, members of his close family, then his friends accepted Islam. Ali (r) son of Abu Talib, who was the young cousin in his charge, Zayd, his adopted son, Ume Ayman (r), the nursemaid who had cared for him after he returned to Makkah at the age of four; and his lifelong friend

Abu Bakr (r) were among the first to recognize the truth of his message and to pronounce the profession of faith expressing their adherence to Islam: "There is no Deity (worthy of worship) except Allah (The One True God) and Muhammad (s) is the Prophet of God."

The number of converts to Islam grew slowly as a result of the Prophet's (s) own thoughtful preaching and the very determined involvement of Abu Bakr (r) who was always ready to speak about the new faith and take action for its sake. He would buy slaves from their masters and set them free in the name of Islam's principles, stressing the equality of all human beings. During those years, Muhammad's (s) presence in Makkah, his actions, and his examples were to attract a large number of men and women who were gradually to embrace the new faith of Islam.

During the first three years, only thirty to forty individuals from Quraysh became Muslims. They would meet the Prophet (s) at the home of one of the Muslim converts and learn the basic teachings of Islam, while the new revelations kept arriving. The surrounding atmosphere was becoming more and more hostile as the inhabitants of Makkah learned about the essentials of this new message of Islam and took stock of its impact on the poor and the young people.

From the beginning, Prophet Muhammad (s) had given priority to quality over quantity, and preferred to concern himself with the nature of the hearts and minds of those he addressed rather than their numbers. Prophet Muhammad (s), aware of those conflicts and of the dangers ahead, decided to concentrate on gradually giving solid education to a small group. He knew well that they would face criticism, rejection, and most probably expulsion. It was this very strong Muslim group, who were later to remain committed in the face of difficulties and harassment.

For three years, Prophet Muhammad (s) quietly built up the first community of strong believers of Islam, whose particular feature was that it gathered, without distinction, men and women of all clans and all social categories.

Revelation

The Divine Transmission

The first revelations oriented Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) consciousness towards God's supreme, educating presence, since He constantly spoke to Him as *Rabbika*, Muhammad's (s) Educator, his Lord. The Angel Gabriel (a.s) had transmitted the first fundamentals of the message and of the recognition of God-the essence of faith-while expressing the centrality of knowledge (reading and writing) allied to good behavior. The announcement of good tidings was also accompanied by a warning about future opposition to Muhammad (s), for never did a person of truth appear on earth without giving rise to a fury of hatred, lies, and calumny. Even some of his own kin, who had loved him, came to hate him so much as to want to kill him.

The Angel Gabriel (a.s) appeared to Prophet Muhammad (s) several times. The Prophet (s) was later to report that the angel sometimes appeared to him in his angelic personality and sometimes as a human being. At other times, Muhammad (s) would hear a bell-like sound and revelation would come suddenly, requiring of him such extreme concentration that he came close to suffocation. This last mode was particularly painful, even though at the end of the process, he was able to repeat word for word the contents of revelation he had received. For twenty three years, the Angel Gabriel (a.s) was to accompany him and reveal, as the situation warranted, the verses and

chapters that would ultimately constitute the Quran. Revelations were not placed in order of the events in the book that was taking shape; they followed an order that the Angel Gabriel (a.s) indicated to the Prophet (s). Every year, during the month of Ramadan, the Prophet (s) would recite to the Angel Gabriel (a.s), all the revelations he had received of the Quran so far in the order the angel had indicated. This was like a regular verification of the contents and form of the Book that was slowly being constituted over a period of twenty-three years.

Purification and Prayer

While Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was walking in the surroundings of Makkah, Angel Gabriel (a.s) came to him one day on the high ground above Makkah, and struck with his heel the turf of the hillside, whereupon a spring gushed forth from it. Then he performed the ritual ablution to show him the postures and movements of the prayer, the standing, the inclining, the prostrating and the sitting, with the repeated magnification, that is, the words *Allahu Akbar*, God is Most Great, and the final greeting, *as-Salamu 'Alaykum*, peace be on you, and again the Prophet (s) followed his instruction one by one. Then the Angel left him, and the Prophet (s) returned to his house, and taught his wife Khadijah (r) all that he had learnt and they prayed together.

The religion was now established on the basis of the ritual purification and prayer; and after Khadijah (r), the first to embrace it were Ali (r) and Zayd (r) and the Prophet's (s) friend Abu Bakr (r). During the early Makkan period, ritual prayer was performed only twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. Later it became an obligation for all Muslims to perform daily prayers for five times.

In the heart of Makkah, in an increasingly hostile environment, the women and men who had accepted Islam were training unsparingly, quietly: they rose at night to pray to God, reciting by heart the signs (Verses) of the Quran, which God had established as the privileged link between His infinite kindness and the heart of each being. This deep and intense spiritual training determined the most significant characteristic of the first believers: pious, discreet, and determined, they prayed to the God of mercy and peace; kept reciting His revelation, which is a reminder and a light and followed the example and teachings of the last Prophet. The essence of the Islamic message is wholly expressed in this intimate relationship of trust and love with Almighty God, the Most High, establishing a direct link between the individual and his or her Creator, Almighty God, who has chosen to demonstrate an exemplary behavior through a Messenger, whom He has set as a model. Three verses were later to produce the exact substance of this teaching:

When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close [to them]: I respond to the prayer of every supplicant when he or she calls on Me.
(Quran 2 : 186)

The Prophet (s), at the heart of this intimate relationship, opens the way:

Say: If you love God, follow me: God will love you and forgive you your sins. (Quran, 3 : 31)

He is the epitome of the human being aspiring to the divine beyond the limit of life:

You have indeed in the Messenger of God an excellent example for the person who hopes in [aspire to get close to] God and the Final Day and who remembers God intensely. (Quran, 33 : 21)

4

Oppression and Persecution

After recovering from the initial experience of Revelation, and as he began to receive the subsequent Revelations. Prophet Muhammad (s) began to share the message with those closest to him, he had not yet received instructions on how to present the message to his people, but he anticipated fierce opposition, as had been foretold by Waraqah, the Monk.

The Public Call

After three years, Prophet Muhammad (s) received a Revelation enjoining him to make his call public;

And admonish your nearest kinsmen. (Quran, 26 : 214)

Prophet Muhammad (s) understood that he now had to convey his message of Islam to the members of the family to which he was linked by their relationship ties. According to Arab custom, people used to climb a hill when they had to announce some important news. One day, the Prophet (s) climbed up Mount As-Safa and called the tribal chiefs one by

one. Thinking he had an urgent or important announcement to make, they gathered at the foot of the hill to listen to him. From where they stood, they could not look into the valley, whereas Muhammad (s) was facing it.

Prophet Muhammad (s) called out to the people of Quraysh and announced; *"If I warned you that down in this valley, armed horsemen are closing in to attack you, would you believe me?"* They answered, almost with one voice: "Certainly – you are trustworthy and we have never heard you tell lies!"

The Prophet (s) then went on: *"Well, I am here to forewarn you of violent torments! God has ordered me to admonish my nearest kinsmen. I have no power to protect you in this life, or to grant you blessings in the life to come, unless you believe in the One God."* He added *"My position is like that of one who sees the enemy and then runs to the people to warn them before they are taken by surprise, shouting as he runs: 'Beware! Beware!'"*

Prophet Muhammad's (s) Uncle, Abu Lahab's response was immediate and scathing: "May you perish! Is this why you have gathered us?" He turned away instantly, taking the assembled chiefs with him. Abu Lahab was thus to set apart those who rejected Muhammad's (s) message and opposed him most violently.

Initially, Abu Lahab, his wife and other leaders of Makkah tried to bribe Prophet (s) with money and power including an offer to make him king if he were to abandon his message. When this did not work, they remarked that he was obsessed with the devil and some said he had gone mad.

Later on, when the Prophet (s) organized two meals to present the message of Islam, the first was a failure because Abu Lahab again intervened to prevent his nephew from speaking. During the second meal, Muhammad (s) was able to

convey the substance of his message, which was heard and secretly accepted by some members of the clans he had invited.

Muhammad (s) continued to speak to his family members until he received another Revelation of the Quran ordering a straightforward, determined attitude:

Therefore expound openly what you are commanded, and turn away from those who join false gods with God. (Quran, 15 : 94)

The Prophetic mission was now entering a new phase. Now, the message of Islam was addressed to all and required a clear-cut distinction between *tawhid*, faith in One God, and the polytheism of the Quraysh. The Prophet (s) had gathered around him a solid core of trustworthy women and men. Some were his relatives, but many came from different social categories and tribes, and he had been providing them spiritual and religious education for the previous three years. With commitment and tolerance, Muslims were to face rejection, harassment, and elimination in a Makkan society that was beginning to split apart.

Offers and Demands

The call to Islam was now public, and even though the training that the new Muslim converts received at al-Arqam's home was sensitive, Muslims did not hesitate to speak to their relatives and to the people around them. Day after day, the Quraysh chiefs became increasingly aware of the danger the new religion posed: this was a straightforward rebellion against their gods and their customs, and it was eventually bound to endanger the chiefs' power. If Islam spread, the tribes would stop visiting the Kaabah to pay homage to the idols. This would deprive them of the

respect they commanded as guardians of the Kaabah. Besides, the prosperity of Makkah depended mainly on these idols, to which offerings were made all the year round by great numbers of the neighboring tribesmen. Trade flourished side by side with the pilgrimage, and this was good income for Makkans, since the town's people had no other way of making money.

The Quraysh chiefs first decided to send a delegation to the Prophet's Uncle, Abu Talib, who had so far been protecting his nephew. They asked him to speak to Muhammad (s) and make him stop spreading his message of Islam, which they considered dangerous and unacceptable because it directly attacked their gods and their ancestors' heritage. Abu Talib took no action after their first visit, so they came back and insisted that the matter was urgent. Abu Talib then sent for his nephew and tried to convince him to terminate his activities in order not to embarrass him.

Muhammad's (s) answer was firm. *"O my uncle, I swear to Almighty Allah that, should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand in order for me to abandon this cause, I would not abandon it before He (God) had made it triumph or I had perished for its sake!"* In the face of such determination, Abu Talib did not insist; in fact, he assured his nephew of his permanent support.

A new delegation of Quraysh chiefs came to Prophet Muhammad (s) and offered him goods, money, and power. He refused their offers one by one and confirmed that he was interested only in his mission: calling people to recognize and believe in God, the One, whatever the price might be.

"I am not possessed, nor do I seek among you honors or power. God has sent me to you as a Messenger, He has revealed to me a Book and has ordered me to bring you good news and warn you. I have conveyed to you my Lord's message and I have given you good advice. If you accept from me what I have brought,

this will cause you to succeed in this world and in the hereafter; but if you reject what I have brought, then I shall wait patiently until God judges between us."

With those words, Prophet Muhammad (s) was setting the limits of possible compromise. He would not stop conveying his message and he would trust in God and be patient as to the consequences of this decision in this world. In practice, hostilities had now begun: clan chiefs kept insulting the Prophet (s) and saying that he was insane, possessed or a sorcerer or a magician.

Quraysh Take Action

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was facing humiliation and mockery. The Makkan people asked him for miracles and proofs, and he tirelessly answered by quoting from the Quran and saying, *"I am but a Prophet!"* The pressure grew, and increasingly violent manifestations of opposition started to appear.

● The Quraysh chiefs particularly attacked poor Muslims and those who were not protected by any clan. Thus the slave Bilal (r) was tied up by his master in the desert sun. A boulder was placed on his stomach to force him to reject Islam, but Bilal (r) kept repeating: "God is One, God is One." Abu Bakr (r) later bought Bilal (r) (as he did for many other slaves) and set him free. Bilal (r) was later to become the muezzin (caller to prayer) of Medina, unanimously respected for the sincerity of his faith, his devotion, and the beauty of his voice.

● 'Enemy of Islam' Abu Lahab took the initiative in the new series of persecutions, and started to share out countless aspects of harmful deeds, hatred and nastiness against Muhammad (s), starting with throwing stones at him, forcing his two sons to divorce their wives Ruqayyah (r) and Ume

Kulthum (r), the Prophet's (s) daughters, showing delight on Prophet's (s) second son's death and calling him 'the man cut off with the offspring.' Tariq, son of 'Abdullah narrated that Abu Lahab would not stop at merely rebuking the Prophet (s), rather he would throw stones at him until his ankles bled.

- Abu Lahab's wife, Ume Jamil also had a share in this merciless campaign. She proved that she was not less than her husband in the enmity and hatred she had for the Prophet (s). In order to cause him bodily injury, she used to tie bundles of thorns with ropes of twisted palm-leaf fiber and scatter them in the paths which the Prophet (s) was expected to take.

She was an ill-mannered and bad-tempered woman with abusive language, highly skilled in the art of hatching intrigues, and enkindling the fire of enmity and hatred. She was stained as '*the carrier of firewood*' in the Quran.

- "Once the Prophet (s) was offering prayers at the Kaabah, and the enemy of Islam Abu Jahl was sitting with some of his friends, one of them said, 'Who among you will bring the guts of a camel and put it on the back of Muhammad (s), when he prostrates?' The most wretched of them, Uqbah got up and brought it. He waited till the Prophet (s) prostrated and then placed it on his back between his shoulders.

They started laughing and falling on one another. The Prophet (s) was in prostration and he did not lift his head up till Fatimah (r) [the Prophet's (s) daughter] came and removed it from his back.

- While the Prophet (s) was praying in Kaabah, they confronted and surrounded him, Uqbah came and put his garment around the Prophet's (s) neck and strangled him violently. Someone came screaming to Abu Bakr (r), "Look at your Prophet." Abu Bakr (r) came and caught Uqbah by his shoulder and pushed him away from the Prophet (s) and said:

"Do you want to kill a man just because he says: 'My Lord is Allah?'"

● Uqbah once approached Prophet Muhammad (s) and most rebelliously and shamelessly shouted at him, "I do not believe in any of the Quran." He then started to deal arrogantly with the Prophet (s) and laid a violent hand on him, tore his shirt and spat at him, but he missed the face of the Prophet (s).

● Abu Jahl, the archenemy of Islam, once addressed some of his accomplices: "O people of Quraysh! It seems that Muhammad (s) is determined to go on finding fault with our religion, degrading our forefathers, discrediting our way of life. I bear witness to our god that I will carry a very heavy rock and drop it on Muhammad's (s) head while he is in prostration to rid you of him, once and for all. I am not afraid of whatever his clan might do." The unfortunate audience approved his plan and encouraged him to translate it into a decisive action.

Next morning, Abu Jahl laid waiting for the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (s) to offer prayers at the Kaabah. The people of Quraysh were in their assembly rooms waiting for news.

When the Prophet (s) prostrated himself, Abu Jahl proceeded, carrying the big rock to fulfill his wicked intention. No sooner had he approached the Prophet (s) than he turned back pale-faced, shuddering with his hands straining while the rock dropped.

The people watching hurried forward asking him what was wrong. He replied: "When I approached, a camel unusual in figure with fearful canines intercepted and almost devoured me." Ibn Ishaq reported that the Prophet (s) in the context of his comment on the incident, said: *"It was Gabriel, if Abu Jahl had approached closer, he would have killed him."*

Media Bashing

Use and Misuse of Freedom of Expression

During the Prophet's (s) period, technology and communication was not as developed as today or rather did not exist at all. There was no print or electronic media then. But this did not stop tongues to utter blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad (s) and his message of Islam. There was absolutely no dearth of poets hanging around in Makkah who wrote and recited poems derogatory of the Prophet (s) and Islam. The poems were nothing but the choicest of abuses directed at the Prophet (s).

History records poets of those times who indulged in character assassination of the Prophet (s). Ka'ab, son of Zuhayr, Haritah, son of Talatil, Hubayrah, son of Abi Wahab, Huwayrith, son of Nafidh and Abdullah, son of Hanzal, to name a few were some poets who rather than using their poetic skills for spirituality, abused it to tarnish the Prophet's (s) pure image.

The Quraysh chiefs organized programs for these poets where they sang their anti-Islam and anti-Prophet lyrics. It did not stop at this. Qartana, slave-girl of Abdullah, son of Hanzal, a poet, Sara, slave-girl of Ikrimah, son of Abu-Jahl would dance to the anti-Islam and anti-Prophet (s) poetry sung by the poets. This was a common occurrence during the Quraysh's wine-drinking orgies. The vulgar and abusive poetry hurt the Prophet (s) and his Companions terribly and it was a mental and psychological torture.

Like it is said in the Quran, "*After every difficulty, comes ease*", to the great relief of the Prophet (s), a few years later, great poets Ka'ab and Hassan son of Thabit embraced Islam. Pronouncement of profession of faith in Islam by poet Hassan

was one of the happiest moments for Prophet Muhammad (s).

The Prophet (s) advised and encouraged Hassan (r) to compose verses in reply to abusive verses of the enemies of Islam. He even allowed Hassan (r) to use the Pulpit (*Mimbar*) from where the Prophet (s) delivered his sermons, to express the positive values and principles of Islam, and Prophet (s) remarked that *"the verses of poet are more effective against the enemies than daggers."* He also once said, *"A Muslim performs Jihad with the swords as well as with his words."* In this way, the anti-Islam and anti-Prophet poets and poetry got an answer to their abuses against Islam.

The scene is no different today. Vicious people across the world, be it intellectuals, writers, painters, artists or cartoonists abuse their freedom of expression and make caricatures, cartoons maligning the Prophet Muhammad (s), Islam and Muslims.

Some partial media carries articles which are prejudiced and biased about Islam. It sends negative vibes all around.

Magician

The Quraysh chiefs kept mocking at Muhammad (s) and encouraging others to criticize and humiliate him. People questioned God's choice in selecting a man who held no particular power, who went about in market-places without any sign setting him apart from other men. They mocked him and his claims as much as the message.

Rumors spread that Muhammad (s) was actually a sorcerer or a magician, who broke up families, separated parents from their children and husbands from their wives, and was a

troublemaker. When the time for the Makkans' annual market grew near, the Quraysh chiefs, fearing that Muhammad (s) might spread his message of Islam among visitors, had their men posted at the various entrances of Makkah. They were to warn arriving visitors of the mischief caused by Muhammad (s) and his Companions by spreading Islam.

'God guides whom He wills !'

The isolation strategy of Quraysh against Muslims worked fairly well, although some people did not allow themselves to be influenced, such as the highway robber Abu Dharr, from the tribe of Banu Ghifar. Having heard of this new message calling for faith in One God, Abu Dharr came to Prophet Muhammad (s) in spite of the Quraysh people's warnings. He found Muhammad (s) lying in the shade near the Kaabah. He called the Prophet's (s) name and asked about his message, listened to him, then immediately pro-nounced the profession of faith. The Prophet (s) was taken by surprise and said: "God guides whom He wills!" Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (r) was to become one of Prophet's Muhammad (s) most famous Companions, known for his devotion, his rigor, and his criticism of luxury and laziness.

First Martyrs of Islam

Ammar (r), a young man of Yemeni origin, had adhered to Islam's message very early and received training from Prophet Muhammad (s) in al-Arqam's home. His father, Yassir (r) and then his mother, Sumayyah (r), became Muslims shortly after he did, and continuously learned the Islamic teachings; Abu Jahl chose them as the object of his revengeful hatred: he took

to beating them, tying them up in the sun, and torturing them. "Despite those tortures, this went on for weeks, Sumayyah (r) and Yassir (r) refused to reject their faith. Sumayyah (r) even shouted at Abu Jahl and his cowardly behavior. Furious Abu Jahl stabbed her to death, then in the same raging anger, he turned to her husband and beat him to death as well. Sumayyah (r) and Yassir (r) were the first martyrs (shuhada) of Islam: persecuted, tortured, then killed for refusing to deny God, His Oneness, and the truth of the revelation of the Quran.

The situation was getting increasingly difficult for Muslims, particularly for the most vulnerable among them as far as social status and clan affiliations were concerned. The Prophet's (s) protection was entrusted by his uncles, Abu Talib and Hamzah (r), but this protection by no means extended to the first spiritual community of Muslims. And insults, rejection and ill-treatment became the rule.

5

Revolution In Mentalities and in Society

The Quraysh's opposition was not merely to a man and a message. Indeed, all of God's Messengers have met with the same reception, the same opposition and hatred from a considerable part of their own community – it is because the contents of what they brought meant a radical revolution in the order of things in society.

The Quran reports the words that greeted the Prophets, in different ages, when they came to convey the message to their respective peoples. The first response was most often a rejection of change, mingled with the fear of losing power, as in the answer given to Prophet Moses (a.s) and Prophet Aaron (a.s) by Pharaoh's people:

They replied: Have you come to us to turn us away from the ways we found our fathers following, in order that you and your brother may have greatness in the Land? But we shall not believe in you.

(Quran, 10 : 78)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was calling people for the rejection of idols, recognition of One God, for

Life after life, for ethics and justice. Muhammad (s) initiated an out-right revolution in mentalities as much as in society. What was evident was the fact that his message was oriented towards the hereafter, and as such shook the foundations of worldly power.

Recognition of the One God and consciousness of Eternity allied to the ethical teaching appeared to the new Muslims as elements of their spiritual, intellectual and social liberation. The Quraysh leaders knew the significance of the essential affirmation of faith in the One God, which all at once expresses an intimate conversion and a general transformation of order:

Say: He is Allah, the One; God, the Absolute; he does not beget, nor is he begotten; and there is none like Him. (Quran, 112)

This statement from the Quran points to the existence of a barrier: Say: O you who reject faith [whose hearts are veiled]! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship! I am not a worshiper of that which you worship, nor are you worshipers of what I worship. To you be your religion, and to me mine. (Quran, 109)

This chapter was revealed when some Quraysh leaders suggested a kind of adjustment between their forefathers' polytheistic religion and the monotheism brought by the Prophet (s). The Revelation's answer is clear and final; it determines the inescapable character of the distinction.

The Three Questions

The Quraysh were at a loss to know about how to prevent Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) message from spreading

further. They decided to send a delegation to Medina to ask Jewish dignitaries about the nature and truthfulness of this new revelation. Medina's Jews were known to profess this same idea of the One God, and Muhammad (s) often referred to Moses (a.s), their Prophet; they were therefore best suited to express an opinion or even to suggest a strategy.

Consulted about the new Prophet (s), the Jewish rabbis suggested that the people of Makkah should ask Muhammad (s) three key questions in order to find out whether what he said was actually revealed, then he is a Prophet sent by God, but if he tells you not, then the man is a forger of falsehood. The first question involved the knowledge of a story about a group of young men's exile from their people; the second was about a great traveler who had reached the ends of the earth in the east and the west; the third was a direct request to define *ar-ruh* (the soul). If he tells you these things, then follow him, for he is a Prophet. The Quraysh delegation left convinced that they now had the means to entrap Muhammad (s). Back in Makkah, they went to him and asked him the three questions. Prophet (s) replied almost instantly: "*I shall answer your question tomorrow!*"

But the next day, the Angel Gabriel (a.s) did not appear. There was no revelation. Nor did the angel come the day after, or during the next fourteen days.

The Quraysh rejoiced certain they had at last managed to prove the duplicity of the so-called Prophet who could not answer the Jews rabbis' questions. As for Muhammad (s), he was sad, and as the days went by, he was increasingly afraid of having been forsaken: without doubting God, he again underwent the experience of self-doubt amplified by his opponents' sneers.

Insha Allah

‘ If God So Wills ’

Two weeks later, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) received a Revelation and an explanation:

Never say of anything, "I shall do that tomorrow," except: "If God so wills," and remember your Lord [Rabb, "Educator"] when you forget, and say: 'I hope that my Lord will guide me ever closer than this to the right course.' (Quran, 18 : 23 - 24)

This revelation once again involved a reproach and a teaching: It reminded the Prophet (s) that his status, his knowledge, and his fate depended on his Rabb, on the One sovereign God, and that he must never forget it. This is how one should understand the meaning of the phrases *Insha Allah*, "*if God so wills*": it expresses the awareness of limits, the feeling of humility of one who acts while knowing that beyond what he or she can do or say, God alone has the power to make things happen. This is by no means a philosophical message: of inaction on the contrary, one should never stop acting while always being aware in one's mind and heart of the real limits of human power. For the second time, the Prophet (s) was called to account by the Magnificent. Whatever adversity one faces, one's strength and freedom on earth consists in remaining constantly aware of one's dependence on the Creator.

Only later was the Prophet (s) to receive the answer to the three questions he had been asked. The delay was surprisingly to strengthen the believers' conviction. Prophet's (s) initial inability to answer and then the belated communication of revelation proved that Muhammad (s) was not the author of the Book that was being constituted and that

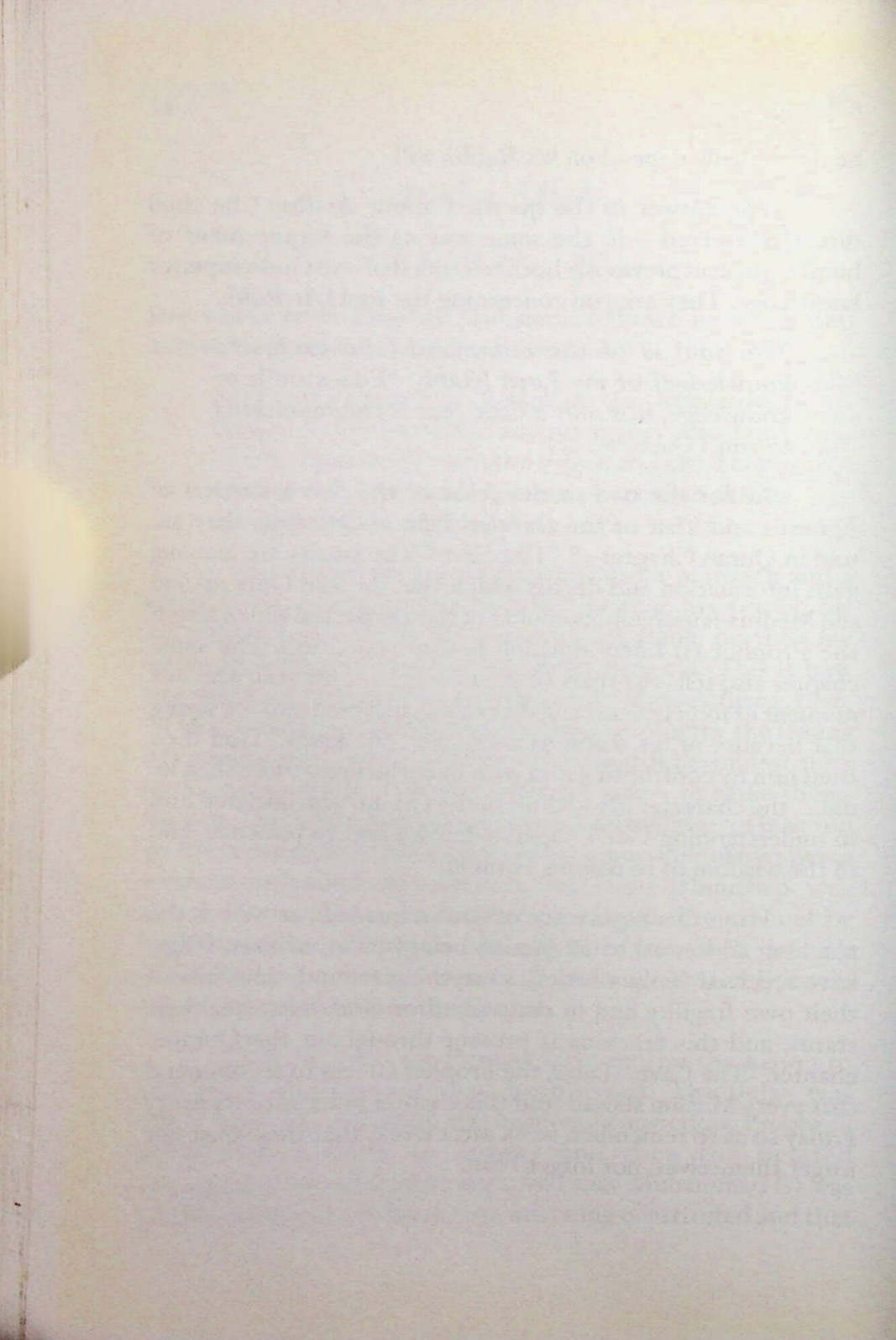
he did actually depend on his *Rabb's* will.

The answer to the question about *Ar-Ruh* (the soul) directly referred – in the same way as the requirement of humility he had previously been reminded of – to God's superior knowledge: They ask you concerning the soul [*Ar-Ruh*].

The soul is of the command [the exclusive knowledge] of my Lord [Rabb, "Educator"]; of knowledge, it is only a little that is communicated to you. (Quran, 17 : 85)

As for the two stories (*that of the Seven sleepers of Ephesus* and '*that of the traveler*' *Dhu al-Qarnayn*), they are told in Quran Chapter-18 "*The Cave*". The stories are teeming with information and details which the Makkan Quraysh and the Medina Jewish rabbis could not have expected and of which the Prophet (s) knew nothing before revelation. The same chapter also tells the story of the Prophet Moses (a.s), who in a moment of forgetfulness and oversight had lapsed into the saying that because of his status as a Prophet, "he knew." God then tried him by confronting him with one who knew more than he did.... the character of al-Khidr in the Quran, who initiated him to understanding God's superior knowledge, to patience, and to the wisdom of remaining humble.

From this experience of Muhammad (s), as well as the teaching addressed to all human beings (who, of knowledge, have received "only a little"), everything reminds Muslims of their own fragility and of their need for God, whatever their status, and this teaching is present throughout the Quranic chapter, "*The Cave*." Later, the Prophet (s) was to recommend that every Muslim should read this chapter in its entirety every Friday so as to remember, week after week, that they must not forget themselves, nor forget Him.



6

Exile
Abyssinia

The humiliations and persecutions increased as Revelation of Quranic verses went on. Now they were no longer aimed only at the most vulnerable among Muslims but also at men and women whose status normally would have protected them, such as Abu Bakr (r). Muhammad (s), protected by his uncle Abu Talib, was also tortured by jeers and ridicule, seeing that the situation in Makkah was getting worse, the Prophet (s) suggested;

"If you went to the land of the Abyssinians, you would find there a king under whose command nobody suffers injustice. It is a land of sincerity in religion. You would remain there until God delivered you from what you suffer at present."

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was referring to the king of Abyssinia, Negus, who was a Christian and who was reputed to be respectful and fair with his people. Part of the Muslim community therefore started to prepare for departure, and eventually a number of individuals and families

discreetly left Makkah, towards Abyssinia. There were in all about a hundred Muslims, eighty-two or eighty-three men and around twenty women.

This took place in the year 615 C.E, five years after the beginning of the Revelation of the Quran and two years after the beginning of the public call. The situation had become particularly difficult, so much so as to prompt those Muslims to take the risk of going into exile very far from Makkah .

The Quraysh leaders soon found out that some Muslims – ironically, not the most weak – had left Makkah. It was not long either before they knew where the Muslims had gone. They had some reason to worry: if this small group of Muslims managed to settle elsewhere, they were bound to tarnish Makkan's reputation and perhaps arouse hostility towards them or even try to constitute an alliance against them with a king who they knew shared the faith in one God. After the Muslims had gone, the Quraysh leaders decided to send two emissaries to King Negus. Amr, son of Al-As and Abdullah, son of Rabiah, in order to discourage him from granting those immigrants his protection and to convince him to send them back to Makkah. The two emissaries went to Negus's court, carrying many presents that they knew to be particularly valued by Abyssinian dignitaries. They met the dignitaries one by one, gave them the gifts, and received assurances of their support when the Makkans submitted their request to the king.

The King Negus

The emissaries of Quraysh, Amr, son of al-As and Abdullah, son of Rabi'ah would have liked the king to agree to send the Muslims back without even hearing the migrants' (Muslims) case. The Negus refused, arguing that those who had chosen him to protect them had the right to present their case. He called for an audience that would include the emissaries from Makkah and a delegation of Muslim immigrants. The Muslim group chose Jafar (r) son of Abu Talib, who was wise and a good speaker, to represent them. The king asked them about the cause of their exile and particularly about the contents of the new message brought by Prophet Muhammad (s). Jafar (r) explained to the king the basic principles contained in the Revelation of Quran and embodied in Muhammad's (s) teaching, faith in One God, the rejection of idol worship, the injunction to respect kinship ties, to say the truth, to oppose injustice, and so on.

Jafar (r) pleaded; "O King, we were plunged into the depth of ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols; we lived in sin; we ate dead animals and we spoke hatred; we disregarded every feeling of humanity, never practiced hospitality and ill-treated our neighbors; we knew no law, but that of the strong. Then God raised among us a man whose birth, truthfulness, trustworthiness and purity everyone vouched for. He asked us to believe in One God, and taught us not to associate anyone with Him. He forbade us the worship of idols and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful and merciful, and to respect the rights of our neighbors. He forbade us to speak evil of women, or to defraud the properties of orphans. He ordered us to abstain from evil, to offer prayers, to render alms, to observe fast. We have believed in Him, we have accepted His teachings and injunctions. For this reason, our people have risen against us, persecuted us and asked us to forgo the worship of One

God and to return to the worship of idols of wood and stone and other abominations. They have tortured us and injured us, until, finding no safety among them, we have come to your country; we hope you will protect us from their oppression."

King Negus was moved by the plea asked Jafar (r) whether he had a copy of or could recite a passage from the text of Revelation (Quran) brought by Prophet Muhammad (s). Jafar (r) answered in the affirmative and started to recite some verses from the chapter "Mary" of the Quran:

Relate in the Book [the story of] Mary, when she withdrew from her fam-ily to a place in the East. She placed a screen [to screen herself] from them: then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared to her as a man in all respects. She said: 'I seek refuge from you in the shelter of the Most Gracious, if you fear Him.' He said: 'I am only an angel from your Lord [to announce] to you the gift of a pure son.' She said: 'How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and that I am not unchaste?' He said: 'so [it will be]; your Lord says: That is easy for Me and [We wish] to appoint him as a sign to men and a mercy from Us'. It is a matter decreed.
(Quran, 19 : 16-21)

The king and his dignitaries were moved by the beauty of the text recited in Arabic, and they were even more so when the text was translated for them and they understood that it announced the miraculous birth of Prophet Jesus (a.s). The King Negus exclaimed, "Indeed, this comes from the same source as what Prophet Jesus (a.s) brought". And he turned to the two Makkan emissaries to reject their request and informed them that he would not hand over to them the Muslim immigrants, to whom he would continue to grant refuge.

‘ Jesus Son of Mary ’

Emissaries of Quraysh, Amr and Abdullah went out, most annoyed, but Amr quickly determined that he would go to the Negus again to inform him about what this new message actually said of Prophet Jesus (a.s), and which by no means coincides with Christian beliefs. He did so the next day, and after listening to him, the king again sent for Jafar (r) and his delegation and demanded to know more about what Prophet Muhammad (s) said about Jesus (a.s). The Muslims were aware of the dangers this encounter involved: and explanation of the differences between the two religions might lead Negus to send them back. They nevertheless decided to keep to the contents of the message and explain what it said truthfully. To Negus's direct question, "What do you profess about Jesus (a.s), son of Mary?" Jafar (r) answered no less directly: "We say what our Prophet has taught us: Jesus (a.s) is God's servant, His messenger, His Spirit, His Word, He has breathed into Mary, the Virgin." There was no reference to his status as "son of God," yet the Negus responded by taking hold of a stick and exclaiming: "Jesus (a.s), son of Mary, does not exceed what you have just said by the length of this stick." The religious dignitaries were surprised at this answer and expressed it by coughing discreetly, but King Negus ignored them and ordered that the two emissaries from Makkah be sent back and that they take all their presents with them. To the Muslims, he renewed his welcome, assuring them that they would find protection and security in his land.

Risk and Truth

This was a major setback for the Makkans, whose revenge was soon to come with the stepping up of atrocities against Muslims after the two emissaries, returned. As for Jafar (r) and his Muslim community, they had found a predominantly Christian country where, although they were exiles and did not share the population's faith, they were received, protected, and tolerated. Muslims had decided to say the truth: at the most hazardous moment of the encounter with King Negus, they had neither tried to evade the question nor lied about what Prophet Muhammad (s) said of Jesus (a.s), son of Mary. They indeed risked being sent back and extradited. In spite of the dangers involved, there was no way out: the Muslims kept to their beliefs, which they expressed with sincerity and honesty. They had no other choice, but to say the truth, and so they did.

Subsequently, King Negus converted to Islam and remained in continuous contact with Prophet Muhammad (s). The Prophet (s) performed the prayer for the absent deceased (*Salat-al-Ghaib*) when he learned of King Negus's death. The majority of Muslims exiled in Abyssinia stayed there for about fifteen years, until the Khaybar expedition (in 630 C.E.), at which time they joined Prophet Muhammad (s) in Medina. Others had gone back to Makkah earlier upon receiving positive news from there, but none ever met with any trouble in Negus's kingdom.

7

Spirit and Courage

HAMZAH

In a gloomy atmosphere infested with dark clouds of injustice and oppression, there shone on the horizon a promising light for the oppressed, i.e., the conversion of Hamzah (r) son of 'Abdul-Muttalib, in the sixth year of Prophethood.

It is recorded that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was one day seated on the hillock of Safa near Kaabah, when Abu Jahl happened to pass by and abused the religion preached by him. Muhammad (s), however, kept silent and did not utter a single word. Abu Jahl went on unchecked, took a stone and cracked the Prophet's (s) head which began to bleed. The aggressor then went to join the Quraysh in their assembly place. Shortly after that, Hamzah (r) while returning from a hunting expedition, passed by the same way, his bow hanging by his shoulder. A slave-girl, who had noticed the offensive behavior of Abu Jahl, told Hamzah (r) the whole story of the attack on the Prophet (s).

On hearing that, Hamzah (r) was deeply offended and hurried to the Kaabah and there, in the courtyard of the holy Sanctuary, found Abu Jahl sitting with a company of Quraysh.

Hamzah (r) rushed upon him and struck his bow upon his head violently and said: "Ah! You have been abusing Muhammad: I too follow his religion and profess what he preaches." Hamzah (r) went to the Prophet (s) and said "Muhammad you should be happy, for I have taken your revenge on Abu Jahl." The Prophet (s) replied: *"I have nothing to do with revenge; yet if you become a Muslim, submit yourself to God alone, then I will be pleased."* Hamzah (r) understood the message and became a Muslim. Hamzah (r) announced that he himself had become a Muslim and that he would now personally take on his nephew's protection. As a result, Abu Jahl stopped abusing Prophet Muhammad (s): instead, started to ill-treat the Prophet's (s) poorest and most vulnerable Muslim companions.

In fact, Hamzah's (r) conversion derived initially from the pride of a man who would not accept the concept of others humiliating his relative. Later on however, God purified his nature and he managed to grasp the most trustworthy handhold (faith in God). He proved to be a source of great strength to the Islamic faith and its followers.

UMAR

Another significant addition to the strength of Islam was the conversion of 'Umar (r) bin Khattab, in the sixth year of Prophethood, three days following the conversion of Hamzah (r). He was a man of courage and determination, feared and respected in Makkah, and until then a bitter opponent of the new religion. The traditional account reveals that the Prophet (s) once raised his hands in prayer and said:

"O God! Give strength to Islam especially through either of two men you love more: 'Umar bin Khattab or Abu Jahl bin Hisham."

One day, Umar (r) was frustrated; He decided the only thing that could be done was to kill Prophet Muhammad (s). This was the surest means of putting an end to the disorder and sedition that was endangering Makkan society as a whole.

Umar (r) went out of his house, his sword in his hand, to look for Muhammad (s). On the way, he met Nuaym, who had secretly converted to Islam. Nuaym asked him why he looked so angry, and Umar (r) told him about his intention to kill the Prophet (s). Nuaym quickly thought of a means to divert his plan. He advised Umar (r) to restore order in his own family before setting upon Muhammad (s). He informed him that his sister Fatimah (r) and his brother-in-law, Sayid had already converted to Islam. Astonished and furious, Umar (r) changed his plans and made straight for his sister's home.

His sister Fatima (r) and her husband were reading the Quran with a young companion, Khabbab (r), when they heard someone approaching their house. Khabbab (r) stopped reading the Quran and hid. Umar (r) had heard the sound of the recitation of the Quran inside, and he accosted them coldly, bluntly asking what they had been reciting. They both denied the fact, but Umar (r) insisted that he definitely had heard them reciting a text. They refused to discuss the matter, which caused Umar's (r) anger to flare. He sprang to his brother-in-law to strike him, and when his sister tried to intervene, he struck her, causing blood to gush out. The sight of blood on his sister's face produced an immediate effect and Umar (r) stopped short. At that very moment, his sister exclaimed with spirit: "Yes, indeed, we are Muslims and we believe in One Almighty God and his Messenger. As for you, you can now do as you please." Umar (r) was taken aback; he was torn between regret at having hurt his sister and bewildered at the news he had just received. He asked his sister to give him the text they had been reading when he arrived. His sister demanded that he should first perform ablutions to purify himself. Sobered, but still upset,

Umar (r) accepted, performed ablutions, and then started reading:

Ta Ha, We have not sent down the Quran to you to (cause) your distress, but only as an admonition for those who Fear (God). A revelation from Him who created the earth and the heavens on high, the Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil. Whether (Or Not) you speak aloud, verily He knows what is secret and what is yet more hidden. He is God! There is no God but him! To Him belong the most beautiful names. (Quran, 20: 1-8)

These were the first verses and Umar (r) went on reading the rest of the text, which was an account of God's call to Moses on Mount Sinai, until he reached this verse:

Verily I am God: There is no God but I: so serve me and establish regular prayer for my remembrance. (Quran, 20 : 14)


Umar (r) then stopped reading and expressed his enthusiasm about the beauty and nobleness of those words. Khabbab, encouraged by Umar's (r) apparent good disposition, then came out of his hiding place and informed him that he had heard the Prophet (s) praying to Almighty God to grant his community support through the conversion of Abu Jahl or of Umar (r). Umar (r) asked him where Muhammad (s) was, and when told that he was at al-Arqam's dwelling place, Umar (r) went there. When he reached the door, the occupants were afraid because Umar (r) was still carrying his sword in his belt. But the Prophet told them to let him in and Umar (r) immediately announced his intention of becoming a Muslim. The Prophet (s) exclaimed, "*Allahu-Akbar*" (God is the Most Great) and received this conversion as an answer to his prayer.

Revolution of the Hearts

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) knew he had no power over hearts. In the face of persecution, in great difficulty, he had turned to God, hoping that He would guide one or the other of those two men who he knew possessed the human qualities as well as the power necessary to reverse the order of things. The Prophet (s) of course knew that God alone has the power to guide hearts. For some individuals, conversion to Islam was a long process that required years of questioning, doubt and steps forward and backward, while for others, conversion to Islam was instantaneous, immediately following the reading of a text or responding to a particular gesture or behavior. This cannot be explained. The conversions that took longest were not necessarily the most solid and the reverse was not true either. When it comes to conversion, the heart's disposition, faith and love matters, and all that remains is the extraordinary power of the divine. Umar (r) had gone out of his home determined to kill Prophet Muhammad (s), blinded by his absolute denial of the One God; there he was a few hours later, changed, transformed, as the result of a conversion induced by a text of the Quran and the meaning of God. He was to become one of the most faithful Companions of the man he had wished dead. Nobody among the Muslims could have imagined that Umar (r) would recognize the message of Islam, so forcefully had he expressed his hatred for it. This revolution of the heart was a sign, and it carried a two-fold teaching: That nothing is impossible for God, and that one should not pronounce final judgments on anything or anybody.

Umar (r), with his spirit and courage had decided to make his conversion to Islam public. He immediately went to Abu Jahl to tell him the news, and he suggested to the Prophet (s)

that they should pray publicly at the Kaabah. This certainly involved risk, but it was also a matter of showing the Quraysh chiefs that Muslims were present among them and were determined. Umar (r) and Hamzah (r), both known for their strong personalities entered the Kaabah enclosure ahead of the group and the Muslims prayed in a group without anyone daring to interfere.



8

The Ban

Nevertheless, things had gone too far. The tension was rising every day, and the Quraysh leaders, met to put an end to the expansion of Islam, they wanted to take more radical measures. The first converts to Islam came from all tribes, and this situation made it impossible to resort to a strategy based on the usual alliances. After prolonged discussions and heated arguments, which divided clans from within, they decided to banish all the Banu Hashim, which was Prophet's (s) clan, and set up a total boycott directed at the clan and its members – they would no longer marry their daughters and sons, nor trade with them, establish any other type of contract, and so forth.

A treaty was signed by about forty Quraysh leaders and hung up inside the Kaabah to signal the solemnity and finality of the decision. Abu Lahab, who himself belonged to the Hashim clan, decided to disown his clan and support the banishment.

This period of boycott was one of great hardship for the Banu Hashim tribe and the Muslims. While this ban was in force, Prophet's (s) uncle Abu Talib, the chief of the Banu Hashim, had to take refuge in a narrow valley. For three years, the Prophet (s) and his Companions lived in this valley. All

supplies to the valley were cut off. Prophet (s) and his Companions sometimes had to live on the leaves and roots of trees.

The situation became serious, and more and more of them suffered from sickness and hunger. The banishment lasted for more than three years, and it economically weakened the two clans. Abu Bakr (r) had lost most of his fortune as a result of the boycott, and the social and psychological pressures were unbearable.

The Dissolution of the Pact

Among the Quraysh, many thought that this boycott was unnecessary, if not useless. Some of course were linked to the clan by kinship ties, which were impossible to forget or disown. There were numerous attempts to put an end to the banishment in the course of those three years, but they never succeeded because a number of key figures, such as Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl, refused to discuss the matter. Finally, change came through the initiative of a few individuals seeking allies in each of the clans. Some of the members of the group who had initiated this little uprising set out to abolish the pact and declare all relevant clauses null and void. They swore they would never relent until the parchment of boycott was torn to piece and the pact broken at once. Abu Jahl, standing nearby, retorted that it would never be torn.

Abu Talib meanwhile came to communicate to Quraysh leaders that a Revelation had been sent to his nephew, the Prophet (s) to the effect that ants had eaten away all their proclamation that smacked of injustice and aggression except those parts that bore the name of Allah. He contended that he would be ready to give Muhammad (s) up to them if his words

proved untrue; otherwise, they would have to take back and cancel their boycott. The Makkans agreed to the soundness of his proposition. The Quraysh leader, Mut'im went to see the parchment (the skin of sheep or goats, prepared for use as a material on which to write.) and there he did discover that it was eaten away by ants and nothing was left, save the part bearing [*in the name of Allah.*]

The hard liners felt there was no point in resisting, the proclamation was thus abolished and the ban was lifted, Muhammad (s) and his Companions were permitted to return home. In the context of this trial to which the Muslims were subjected, the Quraysh leaders had a golden opportunity to experience a striking sign of Muhammad's (s) Prophethood (the white ants eating away the parchment), but to their miserable lot, they desisted and augmented in disbelief.

Quran says :

But if they see a Sign, they turn away, and say 'this is continuous magic.' (Quran, 54 : 2)

The Year of Sorrow

For several months after the boycott ended, the situation improved for the small Muslim community. They again were able to develop ties of friendship and working relationships with the Quraysh. Prophet Muhammad (s) continued to convey his message and the vision sought by Umar (r) had become an everyday reality in Makkah, although the insults and persecutions had not stopped.

Things were soon to change dramatically, however Khadijah (r), the Prophet's (s) wife, died shortly after the boycott

was lifted. She had been Muhammad's (s) wife, companion in faith, and the most reliable support for over twenty-five years, and God called her back to him nine years after the beginning of the mission, in 619 C.E. The Prophet's (s) grief was very deep: he knew that Khadijah's (r) presence by his side had been one of the signs of God's protection and love. In the light of her presence and of the role she played in his life, one can grasp the multiple possible meanings in a verse that was to be revealed much later, which describes the relationships between husband and wife:

They are your garments as you are their garments.
(Quran, 2 : 187)

She had been the garment that protects (emotionally as much as physically), conceals (weakness and doubts as well as riches), and brings warmth, strength, status, dignity and modesty.

It was not long before the Prophet's (s) uncle, Abu Talib, fell seriously ill. Prophet Muhammad (s) visited him where he saw his enemies, Abu Jahl and Abi Umayya. He requested his uncle Abu Talib: *"My uncle you just make a profession that there is no true god but Allah, and I will bear testimony before Allah (of your being a believer)."* Abu Jahl and Abi Umayya addressing him said: "Abu Talib, would you abandon the religion of your father?" Prophet Muhammad (s) continued to request him, and the same thing was said to him (by Abu Jahl and Abi Umayya) till Abu Talib gave his final decision and he stuck to the religion of his father and refused to profess that there is no true god but Allah. Upon this, Prophet Muhammad (s) remarked:

"By God, I will persistently beg pardon for you till I am forbidden to do so (by God)."

They did not have the time to discuss the matter any further. Abu Talib died with the Prophet (s) by his side. This

man, who, with dignity and courage, had granted the younger man his protection, as well as his love and respect, had not embraced Islam. Muhammad (s) loved and respected him, and his sorrow was all the more intense. From this sorrow and powerlessness, a verse, revealed in relation to this event, draws an eternal teaching as to the disposition and the secrets of the hearts:

You will not be able to guide (towards faith) everyone whom you love; but God guides those whom He will, and He knows best those who receive guidance. (Quran, 28 : 56)

In the space of a few months, the Prophet (s) seemed to have become doubly weak as he had lost the person who had offered him love and the person who had granted him protection. In spite of his grief, he needed to react quickly and find the means to protect the community of Muslims who had remained in Makkah. Muhammad (s) decided to seek support outside the city.

KHADIJAH

‘ A Caring Wife ’

It is important to stress here the role played by Khadijah (r) throughout those years ridden with events, some extraordinary and others deeply painful. She was the one who had first noticed and then chose Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) for his honesty, his fairness, and the nobleness of his character. And against usual practice, she had the courage to propose marriage to him through her friend Nufaysah. Their union was to bring them happiness, sorrow, and grief: they lost their two sons, Qasim and Abdullah, in infancy and only their four daughters survived. This family destiny was difficult enough, but among the Arabs, the birth of a daughter was considered shameful;

tradition reports how much, on the contrary, Muhammad (s) and his wife Khadijah (r) surrounded their daughters with deep love and constant care, which they never hesitated to express in public.

When at the age of forty, Muhammad (s) received the first revelation, it was to his wife he immediately turned, and she was the first to stand by him and comfort him. During all the previous years, she observed a man whose nobleness of character was a distinctive feature. When Prophet Muhammad (s) came back to her from the cave of Hira, troubled and assailed with deep doubt as to what he was and what was happening to him, she wrapped him in her love, reminded him of his qualities, and restored his self-confidence. The first revelations were both an extraordinary gift and a terrible trial. He was alone and confused; he turned to his wife, who immediately lent him comfort and support. From that moment on, there were two of them facing the trial, trying to understand its meaning, answering God's call and following the path of spiritual initiation. In this respect, Khadijah (r) is a sign of God's presence at the heart of Muhammad's (s) trial; Khadijah (r) was to be the first to accept Islam, and throughout the first ten years of Muhammad's (s) mission, she was to remain at his side, an unfailingly faithful Companion. Her role in the Prophet's (s) life was tremendous. She was for twenty-five years, his only wife, whose presence alone protected the Prophet (s), but who also underwent with him rejection by his kin, persecution, and isolation. He loved her so much. Khadijah (r) received the good news of his election by God; she was independent, dignified, and respected, then, as a wife, strong, attentive, faithful, and confident; she was a pious Muslim, sincere, determined, and enduring. Muhammad (s), the last Prophet of God, was not alone, and one of the clearest signs of God's bounty and love for him was a woman in his life, his wife.

Prophet (s) deeply mourned over the death of his wife Khadijah (r), in an honest burst of tender emotions:

"She believed in me while the people disbelieved in me. And she trusted in me while the people belied me. And she helped and comforted me, in person and wealth, when the people would not. God provided me with children by her."

Taif

In the beginning of June 619 C.E. of the tenth year of Prophethood, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) set out on foot towards Taif, about 60 kilometers from Makkah, in the company of his freed slave Zayd (r), inviting people to Islam, and spoke to the leaders of the Thaqif tribe, hoping that they would hear the message of Islam. He met with a very cold reception, however and the chiefs mocked his claim to be a prophet. They asked, how could God allow his Messenger to beg for the support of strange tribes? Not only did they refuse to discuss the matter, but they mobilized the population against the Prophet: as he was leaving, insults followed him and children threw stones at him, blood flowed down from his legs; and Zayd (r) trying to shield him, was wounded in the head. The crowd did not cease until they had chased him two or three miles across the sandy plains to the surrounding hills. There, tired and exhausted, he finally had to seek refuge in an orchard in order to escape his tormentors. Alone, having found no protection among his fellow human beings, he turned towards Almighty God and prayed:

"O God, to You alone I complain of my weakness, the meagerness of my resources and my insignificance before men. O Most Merciful of the Merciful, You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord [Rabb, "Educator"], Into whose hands do

You entrust me? To some remote stranger who will ill-treat me? Or to an enemy to whom You have granted authority over my affairs? I harbor no fear so long as You are not angry with me. Yet Your gracious support would open a broader way and a wider horizon for me! I seek refuge in the light of Your face, by which all darkness is illuminated and the things of this world and the next are set a right, so that I do not incur Your anger and am not touched by Your wrath. Nevertheless, it is Your privilege to caution as long as You are not satisfied. There is no power nor strength but in You."

At that particular moment, away from other people, in the solitude of his faith and of his confidence in the Most Gracious, he literally and wholly put himself in God's hands; in this sense, this prayer reveals all the confidence and peace, Muhammad (s) drew from his relationship to the Most Near Almighty God. This prayer, which has become famous, tells of humanity's helplessness and of the Messenger's extraordinary spiritual strength. Seemingly lonely and without support, he knew that he was not alone.

A Slave

The two owners of the orchard had seen Muhammad (Peace be upon him) from a distance as he entered, and they had observed him as he raised his hands and prayed to God. They sent their slave Addas, a young man who was a Christian, with a bunch of grapes. When Addas gave him the grapes, he heard the Prophet (s) say: "*Bismillah!*" ("In the name of God," "I begin with God"). Addas was most surprised and inquired about the identity of this man, who said words, which, he a Christian had never heard

polytheists say. Muhammad (s) asked him where he was from and Addas answered that he came from Nineveh (now in Israel). The Prophet (s) added: *"The land of Jonah the Just, son of Matta"*. The young man was puzzled and wondered how this man could know of that. After informing him that he was a Christian, Addas in turn asked Muhammad (s) who he was and how he had received his knowledge. The Prophet (s) told him: *"Jonah is my brother. He was a Prophet and I am a Prophet."*

Addas gazed at Prophet (Peace be upon him) for a while then kissed his head, hands, and feet; his masters were shocked at this, and when he went back to them, he told them that only a Prophet (s) could know what that man knew. Addas accepted Islam immediately, after a few minutes' discussion. The Christian king of Abyssinia had immediately recognized the linkage between the two messages, and now it was a young slave, also a Christian, who shared the same feeling. Twice already, in sorrow and isolation, Muhammad (s) had encountered on his path Christians who offered him trust, respect and shelter: a king welcomed Muslims and granted them security; a slave served their Prophet (s) when everybody else had rejected him and his message of Islam.

God's Messenger was then refreshed and his heart was set at rest in the light of that invisible divinely provided aid and then he proceeded towards Makkah.

Responsive in Medina

At Al-Aqabah, not far from Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) met a group of people from Medina. They were from the Khazraj tribe, one of the two great rival tribes in Medina (the other being the Aws), and Muhammad (s) began to deliver his message of Islam to them. They had already heard of

the message from the Jewish tribes who lived in their city, and they wished to know more about it. They listened to the Prophet (s) and eventually accepted the message of Islam. They promised to inform the members of their tribe of the substance of the message and to keep in permanent contact with the Prophet (s). They went back home and began preaching the message of Islam in Medina.

A year later, pilgrims and traders were again flocking to Makkah for the celebrations. A second meeting was organized at Al-Aqabah between the Prophet (s) and the Medina delegation that had come to report on the evolution of the situation in their Medina city. Twelve people from Medina, two of whom belonged to the Aws clan, took part in the meeting. They pledged allegiance to the Prophet (s), stipulating that they would worship only One God, and that they would honor the duties and requirements of Islam. They were therefore to constitute the first Muslim community in Medina. Muhammad (s) sent back with them a Companion, Musab (r) son of Umayr, known for his calm, wisdom, and the beauty of his recitation of the Quran.

Back in Medina, the delegation kept spreading the message of Islam and Musab (r) taught Islam, recited the Quran, and answered questions put to him by the people of Medina. In spite of the age-old sharp divisions between the Aws and Khazraj, members of both tribes converted to Islam and realized that their former rivalries had become pointless. Islam's message of brotherhood united them. Clan chiefs nevertheless remained very reluctant to embrace Islam. Musab (r) neither reacted to their attacks nor to their aggressive attitude; rather, did he answer: "Sit down and listen to the message. If you like it, accept it. If you do not, leave it." As a result, even among leaders, the number of conversions was high.

During the following year's pilgrimage, the Prophet (s) met an important delegation of Medina Muslims, composed of seventy-three people, two of them women, they belonged to both the Aws and the Khazraj, and they had come to bring the Prophet (s) the good news of their commitment to Islam. After few discussions about the nature of their future relationship, they concluded a second covenant stipulating that the Medina Muslims pledged to protect the Prophet (s), as well as Makkan Muslim women and children, against any aggression.

This second agreement, granting refuge and protection and a commitment of Medina Muslims to support their Makkan Muslim brothers and sisters, opened before the Prophet (s), the prospect of a promising future. From then on, Muhammad (s) encouraged Muslims to immigrate to Medina discreetly, while his closest Companions still remained by his side.

A Conspiracy

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) most recent protector in Makkah, Mutim, had just died. The situation was becoming particularly difficult, and the Quraysh, who had noticed that the Muslims were beginning to leave Makkah, were in their turn becoming more and more violent in their opposition. The clan chiefs decided to unite, and at Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl's instigation, they resolved that the Prophet (s) must be done away with. Their plan was to nominate an executioner from each clan in order to prevent the Banu Hashim from taking revenge from any particular clan and asking for blood money. They agreed that no time must be lost and that they must get rid of Prophet Muhammad (s) as soon as possible.

The Angel Gabriel (a.s) had come to confirm to the Prophet (s) the meaning of a dream he had seen a few days

before, when in a vision he had seen a flourishing city appear and welcome him. The angel announced to him that he must prepare to immigrate to Medina and that his companion was to be Abu Bakr (r). Prophet (s) conveyed the news to Abu Bakr (r), who wept with joy. Muhammad (s) asked Ali (r) to take his place in his bed the following night, and not to leave Makkah until he ordered him to.

When Quraysh executioner's heard some noise inside the house, which they took to be Muhammad (s) arising and preparing to leave, they were almost ready to launch their attack when they realized that they had been deceived and that the man inside the house was his cousin Ali. Quraysh and their Allies' plan had failed.

9

HIJRAH
Emigration

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) trust in One God was absolute and had never caused him to drift with the tide of events. Revelation of the Quran had reminded him that he must never forget to say "*Insha Allah*" (If God so wills) when he planned to act, and that the memory of God must be associated with humility, (especially in regard to his own powers as a human being).

Prophet Muhammad (s) had been planning a *Hijrah* (emigration) to Medina for almost two years, and nothing had been left to chance. Only after making intelligent and thorough use of his human powers had he trusted himself to the divine will, thereby clarifying for us the meaning of "*At-tawakkul 'ala-llah*" (reliance on God and trusting Oneself to God). Each one of us has been granted qualities such as intellectual, spiritual, psychological, sentimental, etc. along with the ability of exercising them. At the same time, humbly remembering that beyond what is humanly possible, God alone makes things happen. Indeed, this teaching is the exact opposite of the temptation of fatalism. God will act only after humans have, at

their own level, sought out and exhausted all the potentialities of action. That is the profound meaning of this Quranic verse:

Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

(Quran, 13: 11)

ABU BAKR

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr (r) decided to leave Makkah at night and head towards Yemen to avoid attracting attention. Having headed south, they went into hiding for a few days in the Thawr cave.

Notwithstanding all the arrangements made, a group of Quraysh men, suspecting a trick, went south to look for Prophet Muhammad (s). They arrived in front of a cave and prepared to enter. From where he stood, Abu Bakr (r) could see them, and in alarm, he told the Prophet (s) that, should the men happen to look down they could not fail to see the two of them. Muhammad (s) reassured him and whispered, *"Have no fear, for God is with us."* (Quran, 9:40)

Then he added, "What do you think of two [people] whose third is God?" Those words soothed Abu Bakr (r). In front of the cave, the group noticed that a spider web covered the entrance and also that a dove had nested there. It seemed obvious that Muhammad (s) could not be hiding in the cave, and they decided to look for them somewhere else.

Once again, in spite of their carefully planned strategy, Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Companion were going through the trial of weakness. Their lives had been preserved by nothing, but that fragile spider web; trust in God (*at-tawakkul-alallah*),

of which the Prophet (s) reminded Abu Bakr (r) at that particular moment and thus took on its full meaning and strength. God alone had power to save His Messenger. When Muhammad (s) emigrated, he took care to owe nothing to anyone (he refused gifts, settled his debts, and gave back the deposits he held), but he also knew that he owed everything to the One God, that his indebtedness and obligation to Him were infinite.

Abu Bakr (r) had enlisted the services of a non-Muslim Bedouin, Urayqat, to guide them to Medina by an unnoticeable, unfamiliar route. At the time appointed for departure, Urayqat came to meet them at the cave with camels, and they headed west, then south, before eventually going north towards Medina, 340 km from Makkah. It was a very risky journey, and were the Quraysh to catch up with the three travelers, they were sure to kill them so as to put an end to Muhammad's (s) Islamic revolutionary activities.

The Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Companion had entrusted themselves to God, yet they had not hesitated to enlist the help of a Bedouin who, although shared their enemies' polytheistic beliefs, was well known to them for his trustworthiness (he was proudly true to his word) and his abilities as a guide (he knew better than anyone else the steep, out-of-the way paths they took). Again, such an attitude was present throughout the Prophet's (s) life. The women and men he surrounded himself with, may not have shared his faith of Islam, but they were known to him for their moral qualities and / or their human abilities. Muhammad (s), like those who came after him, did not hesitate to rely on them.

HIJRAH

A Trial of Trust

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and all his Companions had to leave Makkah because of persecutions and adversity from their own brothers and sisters within their respective clans. The situation had become unbearable: women and men had died, others had been tortured, and the Quraysh had finally decided to set upon Muhammad (s) himself and get rid of him. The emigration is first of all the objective reality of Muslim women and men who were not free to practice their faith in Islam and who decided to make a clean break for the sake of their beliefs. Because: 'God's earth is spacious,' as the Quran puts it, they decided to leave their homeland, to break with their universe and habits, and to experience exile, all for the sake of their faith.

Revelation of the Quran was to praise the courage and determination of those Muslim believers who, by taking such a difficult and humanly costly step, expressed their trust in One God Allah:

To those who leave their homes in the cause of God, after suffering oppression, we will assuredly give a goodly home in this world; but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater, if they only realized [this]!, Those who persevere in patience, and put their trust in their Lord. (Quran, 16:41-42)

Exile is then, another trial of trust. All prophets have intensively experienced this trial of the heart, as all believers have after them. How far are they prepared to go, how much are they prepared to give of themselves and of their lives, for the One God, His truth and His love? Those are the eternal

questions of faith, which accompany every temporal and historical experience of the believing conscience. *Hijrah* was one of the Muslim community's answers at the dawn of its existence.

In effect, exile was also required so that the first Muslims learn to remain faithful to the meaning of Islam's teachings in spite of the change of place, culture, and memory. Medina meant new customs and new types of social relationships.

Exile was the most profound experience, since it implied uprooting oneself while remaining faithful to the same God, to the same meaning, in different environments.

Persecuted because of their beliefs in Islam, the faithful Muslims decided to break away from their tormentors and march to freedom. In doing so, they stressed that they could not accept oppression, that they could not accept the status of victim, and that basically the matter was simple: publicly speaking the name of God implied either being free or breaking free. This same message had already been conveyed by the Prophet (s), then by Abu Bakr (r), to all the slaves in Makkah: their arrival in Islam meant their liberation, and all the teaching of Islam pointed to the ending of slavery. Henceforth, a broader call was addressed to the Muslim spiritual community as a whole: faith requires freedom and justice and one must be prepared, as was the case with *Hijrah*, to pay the personal and collective price for it.

Hijrah is the exile of the conscience and of the heart from false gods, from evil and sins. Turning away from the idols of one's life (power, money, the cult of appearances, etc.); emigrating from lies and unethical ways of life; liberating oneself, through the experience of breaking away, from all the appearances of freedom ironically reinforced by our habits – such is the spiritual requirement of *Hijrah*. Later on, questioned by a Companion about the best possible *Hijrah*, the Prophet

(s) answered: "*It is to exile yourself [to move away] from evil [abominations, lies, sins].*" This requirement of spiritual exile was to be repeated in different forms.

Thus, the Muslims who performed *Hijrah*, emigrating from Makkah to Medina, in effect experienced the unique dimension of Islam's teachings, since they had to achieve a new return to themselves, an emigration of the heart. Their physical journey to Medina was a spiritual exile towards their inner selves; in leaving their city and their roots, they came back to themselves, to their intimacy with God, to the meaning of their lives beyond historical contingencies.

Umar (r) was later to decide that this unique event would mark the beginning of an Islamic era, which begins in 622 CE. What remains, and is open to everyone through the ages and for eternity, is the experience of spiritual exile, which brings the individual back to him-or herself and frees him or her from the illusions of self and of the world. Exile for the sake of God is in essence a series of questions that God asks each individual being: "Who are you? What is the meaning of your life? Where are you going? Accepting the risk of such an exile, trusting the One God, is to answer: through You, I return to myself and I am free."

IO

MEDINA

The journey from Makkah to Quba lasted twenty days. The Messenger (Peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr (r) reached the little village of Quba, which lay outside Medina. The people were waiting for them and gave them a warm welcome. They spent three days in the village and began construction of a mosque there, the first of the emigration period. When he left Quba, the Prophet (s) headed towards Medina and halted at noon, prayer time, in the Ranuna valley, where he performed the first Friday prayer with his Companions: there again, construction of a mosque was begun. He then arrived at Medina on Monday 4th October 622 C.E., (*on the first year of Hijrah*). Many people stopped him, inviting him to reside with them. He asked them to let Qaswa, his camel, go unhampered, for she would indicate the exact spot where he would settle. She moved back and forth through the crowd, and then at last stopped near some land belonging to two orphans. On this spot, construction of his private residence and a mosque immediately began.

Mosque

In building these three Mosques, the Prophet (s) was pointing to the importance and centrality of the Mosque in the relation to God, to space, and to human communities. The building of a *Masjid*, Mosque (the place where one prostrates oneself) institutes a specific observance within the primary and essential observance of the universe as a whole; as the Prophet (s) said, *the whole earth is a Mosque*, this saying of Muhammad (s) has the simple meaning that, the Prophet (s) was permitted (by Allah) to offer prayers anywhere on earth; no part of the earth was "unclean" as such. Similarly, Muslims following the Prophet (s) are allowed (by the Islamic law) to pray anywhere. Hence one can routinely observe Muslims offering prayers in such diverse places as parks, by the roadside, on railway platforms, airport terminals, etc... The whole of the earth is a "place of worship" for Muslims; they remember God and offer prayers at the appointed time, wherever they may be.

Apart from this simple meaning, the saying of the Prophet (s) has another, more profound meaning. A Muslim realizes that a mosque is a "peaceful" place; people enter it in a state of "purity". Their body and their clothes are clean. Their minds and hearts are also clean; they approach the mosque as humble servants of God. When they enter the mosque, they pronounce *Assalamu Alaikum* (Allah's peace be upon you) to those already present in the mosque. This is a declaration of "peace" by the newcomers. The mosque radiates "peace" and harmony and it gives the twin message of *tawheed* (oneness of God) and human brotherhood. The central mosque in the world is Kaabah. Kaabah has been declared as *haram* in the Islamic law. No bloodshed is permitted in Kaabah or in its vicinity. Thus the message of "peace" associated with a mosque, attains its highest degree in the context of the central mosque (the Kaabah).

Thus when the Prophet (s) likened the earth to a mosque, he was also emphasizing the need of making the earth a "Peaceful" place. All human beings should be able to enjoy "Peace" everywhere on earth, according to the Prophetic vision. The ideal of peace would be achieved when the earth actually resembles a mosque and, like a mosque, spreads the message of harmony and human brotherhood.

Assalaamu Alaikum

God's peace be upon you

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) first words on arriving at Quba informed the Muslims of their basic responsibilities: Spread peace with the Islamic greeting, *Assalaamu alaikum* (Allah's Peace be upon you) with the reply *Walaikum-us-salaam* (Allah's peace be upon you too). Feed the hungry, honor kinship ties; pray while people sleep, you shall enter paradise in peace. The two references to peace, at the beginning and at the end of his address, point to how the Prophet (s) wished his Companions to understand their settlement in their new city. Caring for the poor and honoring kinship ties appear as remainders of the ethical basis of the Muslim presence, which each believer must pledge to permanently respect. Night prayer — "while people sleep" — makes for the spiritual exile mentioned above, and thereby provides the heart with the strength and peacefulness in faith that make it possible to fulfill the requirements of respecting ethics and of spreading peace. This quest for inner peace (alone, but in the warm light of one's family's love) is the path the believer must follow to be able to spread peace in the world and serve the poorest people.

These teachings were present throughout the Prophet Muhammad's (s) life including at each stage of his settlement in Medina. On arriving in Medina, he already possessed symbolic and political power that none of the city's dignitaries could ignore. Many of Medina's inhabitants had converted to Islam and recognized him as God's Messenger; those converts came from both the Aws and Khazraj clans, which had been at war for ages. The message of Islam had been powerful enough, to unite women and men from different clans, different social classes, and different origins.

A Treaty with the Jews

Soon after immigrating to Medina and making sure that the pillars of the new Islamic community were well established on the strong basis of administrative, political and ideological unity, the Prophet (s) started to establish regular and clearly-defined relations with non-Muslims. All of these efforts were exerted solely to provide peace, security, and prosperity to all mankind at large, and to bring about a spirit of understanding and harmony within his region, in particular.

Geographically, the closest people to Medina were the Jews. While harboring evil intentions, and nursing a bitter feeling of resentment, they showed neither the least resistance nor the slightest hostility. The Prophet (s) decided to conclude a treaty with them with clauses that provided full freedom in faith and wealth. He had no intention whatsoever of following severe policies involving expulsion, seizure of wealth and land or hostility.

The treaty came within the context of another of a larger framework relating to inter-Muslim relationship.

Medina and its suburbs, after the endorsement of the treaty, turned into a coalition democratic state, with Medina proper as capital and Muhammad (s) as 'president'. Authority lay mainly in the hands of the Muslims, and consequently it was a real capital of Islam. To expand the zone of peace and security, the Prophet (s) started to enter into similar treaties with other tribes living around 'his state'.

The contract (*al-Ahd*) was to become central in Islam, from marriage contracts to social or commercial contracts and those drawn up to settle conflict or war situations. Quran states the importance of contract and the need to stand by their conditions: "*For every engagement will be inquired into.*" (Quran, 17: 34)

The Prophet (s) said in this respect: "*Muslims must stand by the terms of their contracts.*"

Hypocrites

In spite of the agreements, in spite of Prophet Muhammad's (s) efforts to reassure the different tribes and the different religious leaders, the situation was far from simple. It involved dealing with some people's jealousy, greed, and struggle for power, and with others' frustrations.

In Medina, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was confronted with attitudes which he had little opportunity to know in Makkah, where conversion to Islam required such sacrifices in human terms that it could spring only from sincere and deeply believing hearts. Henceforth, things were to be different. The social configuration in Medina, the different power centers there and the very nature of Prophet Muhammad's (s) role – exerting such obvious influence over

hearts and social affairs alike – entirely transformed the situation. Some individuals saw an opportunity to gain power in publicizing their conversion to Islam. In the first chapter revealed in Medina, the Quran refers to this troubling ghost of the “hypocrites,” the *munafiqun*, who are a major danger, since they attack the Muslim community from within. Thirteen long verses of the Quran in chapter-2 (*Al-Baqarah*, The Cow) (which is also the longest chapter in the Quran) describe the hypocrites’ attitudes and speech, laden with duplicity and treachery. Of the people, there are some who say:

We believe in God and the Last Day”, but they do not believe. They attempt to deceive God and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realize it not! (Quran, 2 : 8-9)

Then further on:

When they meet those who believe, they say: “We believe,” but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: We are really with you; we were only jesting [when pretending to believe]. (Quran, 2 : 14)

The danger was real, and it was to become permanent. Some of those people stirred up ancient quarrels between the Aws and the Khazraj, and one of these attempts would almost have succeeded if one member had not, just in time, reminded them of the superior nature of their brotherhood in Islam.

One member of the Khazraj clan, Abdullah, son of Ubay, had converted to Islam, but appeared to many believers as a troublemaker, the typical figure of the hypocrites as described in the Quran. Abu Amir of the Aws clan was perceived in the same way, and he did spread the poison of trouble. No particular measure had been taken against them, but people were wary of them and took care not to fall into snares that could cause division in the Muslim ranks.

Pinnacle of Brotherhood

In order to tighten the bonds between Muslims, and in particular between those Muslims who were from Medina (the Ansar) and those who had emigrated from Makkah (the Muhajir), Prophet Muhammad (s) decided to set up a formal pact of brotherhood between the Muslims. This meant that each Muhajir was bound by pact to one among Ansar, who was to help him settle down, share his belongings with him, and enable him to live in Medina in the best possible circumstances. On a broader level, their relationships were based on brotherhood, sharing, and mutual spiritual assistance (the Muslim exiles from Makkah would teach their sisters and brothers in Medina what they knew). This pact was to provide the new Muslim community settled in Medina with particular strength and unity. Extremely deep relationships were created between believers of Islam who were later to attest to the intensity of their mutual love in God. Prophet Muhammad (s) had presented this love as the pinnacle of brotherhood in faith, and his Companions strove to achieve it in their daily actions and commitments: "On the Day of Resurrection, God will say:

"Where are those who loved one another for the sake of My grace [My glory]? Today, I shall shade them with my shade, on a day when there is no shade but mine."

The way the Muslims dealt with the many painful, difficult, and dangerous situations they encountered show that they had achieved a highest degree of brotherhood and trust that no harsh conditions could ever manage to destroy.

Those bonds constituted the Muslim community's spiritual and social strength, and in this lay the secret of their

success before God and among men; faith in God, love for parents, fraternity among people, and ethics at the service of the universe and of all beings.

AZAAN

The Prayer Call

As months went by, ritual practices had been gradually instituted: fasting in the month of Ramadan and a more precise imposition of *Zakat* (*Zakat* means: purifying one's wealth to gain Allah's blessing to make it grow in goodness), were added to the profession of faith and to prayer. The Muslims met in the mosque at precise times and prayed together.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was looking for a means to call the faithful to prayer. He had been considering the possibilities of imitating Jewish or Christian practices, with bells or with a horn. One day, however, Abdullah, son of Zayd, an Ansar, came to Prophet Muhammad (s) and told him of a dream in which a man taught him the manner in which he was to call others to prayer. The Prophet (s) listened to him and immediately recognized that the vision was genuine. He sent for the former slave Bilal (r), whose voice was extraordinarily beautiful, and had him stand on top of the highest house near the mosque and call the people to prayer.

1. *"Allahu Akbar"*

'God is the Greatest,'
(repeated four times)

2. *Ashhadu An La Illa-l-Lah*

'I bear witness that
there is no god but
the One God'
(repeated twice)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 3. <i>Ashhadu Anna Muhammadan
Rasulu-l-Iha</i> | I bear witness that
Muhammad is the
Messenger of Allah,
(repeat twice) |
| 4. <i>Hayya 'Ala-s-salah</i> | Come fast to Prayer,
(repeated twice) |
| 5. <i>Hayya 'Ala-l-falah</i> | Come fast to success,
(repeated twice) |
| 6. <i>Allahu Akbar</i> | God is the Greatest,
(repeated twice) |
| 7. <i>La illaha illa-l-lah</i> | there is no god but the
One and True God,
(once) |

This same, never changing call, based on the affirmation of God's greatness ("*Allahu Akbar*"), the profession of faith ("*I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad (s) is God's Messenger*"), and an invitation to prayer and success in this world and the next, has for almost fifteen centuries been resounding through Muslim towns and cities. In all its different accents, rhythms, and voices, this call in its musicality expresses the union of faith and beauty, of spirituality and artistic visual.

Just as Prophet Muhammad (s) had wished it, when he chose Bilal (r) as a muezzin, it is a reminder of the One God who loves beauty, and who, five times a day, welcomes those who answer the beautiful call that invites them to meet the Most Beautiful, *al-Jamil (this is one of God's name)*.

MEDINA

The Welfare State

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his Companions who had come from Makkah were gradually settling down in Medina and they were beginning to find their marks in this new environment.

A society was being constituted under particularly difficult circumstances. Inter-tribal and power conflicts often complicated the relationships between Muslims and members of different clans, in spite of the agreements and alliances.

The Prophet Muhammad's Companion's, religious and spiritual education nevertheless went on, and the Prophet (s) was always available to remind them of the principles to which believers must henceforth remain faithful.

In Makkah, resentment was high, and the success of the emigration was evident not only as a humiliation, but also as a threat to the balance of power in the Arabian Peninsula as a whole. For decades, the Quraysh had been naturally acknowledged as the unchallenged leaders on account not only of their past, but also of the fact that they were in charge of the city of Makkah, the idols' sanctuary and the site where all the tribes converged once a year to trade. The news of Muhammad's (s) secession and settlement in Medina had spread all over the Arab Peninsula, and this significantly affected the Quraysh's reputation and actual power. Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Companions knew it and were expecting some imminent reaction from the clan and family members they knew so well.

Dispute with the Quraysh

Not all the Muslims had immigrated to Medina; those Muslims who had stayed behind in Makkah were ill-treated by the

Quraysh leaders, as the latter were obviously most upset by Muhammad's (s) success. Indeed, some Muslims had stayed in Makkah without publicizing their conversion to Islam, and they now feared the violent revenge that would inevitably follow if that fact became known.

Some of the Quraysh went further and even decided, in violation of the honor code respected by all the clans in the peninsula, to seize the property and belongings which the Muslim emigrants had left behind in Makkah. When the Muslims heard of this behavior of Quraysh, which was considered shameful and cowardly, Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Muslims who had settled in Medina were naturally angry.

For more than a year, Prophet Muhammad (s) had been setting up pacts with some tribes along the Red Sea coast, on a route generally taken by Makkan caravans traveling north, beyond Medina, to Iraq or Syria. This was bound to inconvenience the Quraysh, who had to find new routes to the east. Tensions were growing steadily, and the Quraysh, who wished to tarnish the exiled Muslims' reputation started to mobilize the area's tribes against them.

Over the same period, Prophet Muhammad (s) also sent out missions whose main purpose was to gather intelligence about the Quraysh's movements and activities, their intentions (or possible war preparations), and the new alliance they might set up in the area. Watchfulness was essential, as the Quraysh's hostility was intensifying and becoming increasingly open and widespread.

The intelligence gathered here and there by Prophet Muhammad's (s) envoys pointed to the fact that a War was imminent.



JIHAD

Resistance

Whenever his opponents attacked him, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) used the Quran to answer, protect himself and resist. This is what the Revelation of the Quran clearly taught him, this verse which marks the first incident of the word *Jihad* in the Quran:

Therefore do not obey the negators, but strive against them (Jahidhum) with the Quran with the utmost resistance (Jihadan Kabira). (Quran, 25:52)

Confronted with pressures of all sorts, from the mildest to the most violent, Prophet Muhammad (s) received a verse (revelation of Quran) that pointed to the ways and means of resistance – of the *Jihad* – he was to undertake.

What we find here is the initial and essential meaning of the concept of *Jihad*, the root of which in Arabic 'Ja-ha-da', means "making an effort" – but also in this instance, "resisting" (that is, resisting oppression and persecution).

Almighty God orders His Messenger Muhammad (s) to resist the Quraysh's ill-treatment of him by relying on the Quran.

The Quranic text is actually his spiritual and intellectual weapon against their aggression. To those who sneer, insult, and humiliate, to those who attack, torture, and kill, to those who want miracles and proofs, Prophet Muhammad (s) invariably answers with the weapon and shield of the Quran.

Armed with the knowledge of Quran, Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Companions first of all tried to convey their message freely while avoiding confrontation.

The Quraysh leaders did not want it to be so, and they intensified their persecutions as Revelations of the Quran followed upon each other in rapid succession. The first Muslim Companions, like the Prophet (s), engaged in resistance – in jihad – reminding people of the existence of the One God, of Life after life, of the Last Judgment, and of the necessity for good, and the Quran was always the weapon of their spiritual and intelligence discernment or judgment and their shield in the face of physical brutality.

However, the persecution was so violent and continuous that this Jihad was sometimes difficult to bear. One day, a group of Muslims came to the Prophet Muhammad (s). They asked him: "Won't you invoke God for us, that He may help us?" The Prophet (s) firmly answered:

"Among the believers who came before you, many were thrown into ditches dug for them and were sawed in two from head to foot, and this did not turn them away from their religion; their flesh was torn apart from their bones and sinews with iron combs, and this did not turn them away from their religion. By God, this cause will certainly prevail, so it will be possible for a lone traveler to go from Sanaa to Hadramout [regions in Yemen] without fearing anything but God, or the wolf for his sheep. But you are too impatient!"

They therefore had to be patient, endure, persevere, and never despair of God and of His will. Prophet Muhammad (s) was teaching his Companions the difficult association of trust in God with pain. The experience of physical and moral suffering made it possible to reach the state of faith where one accepts adversity, where one can doubt oneself without doubting God.

QITAL

Armed Resistance

During this same period, Prophet Muhammad (s) received two successive Revelations, totally different in nature, but whose consequences were equally to constitute a break with the past. For more than thirteen years, Muslims had been called upon to exercise patience and passive resistance in the face of the persecution and terror they suffered at the hands of Quraysh leaders and other clans. They had endured, persisted, and then emigrated to Medina, without responding to aggressions, avoiding confrontation.

Once the Muslims had settled in Medina, it had become obvious that the Quraysh were going to step up their opposition and find other means to put an end to the Prophet's (s) Islamic mission, which now no longer threatened only the political balance in Makkah, but also the order of powers throughout the Arab peninsula. What was at stake was the Quraysh's position with regard to all the other tribes and clans, their religious and military standing was at risk.

Hijrah, migration to Medina, which was liberation, also meant conflicts and struggles to come.

Then the Prophet (s) received a Revelation that left no room for doubt:

Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged-and verily, God has the power to help them-those who have been driven from their homelands unjustly for no other reason except that they say: "Our Lord is Allah!!

(Quran, 22 : 39-40)

Abu Bakr (r) was later to say that when he heard this verse, he immediately understood that it announced impending conflict and war, and so did the Prophet (s) and his other Companions. Henceforth, the Muslims' were no longer required to resist passively; rather, they were to defend themselves against enemy aggression. To the *Jihad* of spirituality and intelligence, which had consisted either in resisting the darkest attraction of the selfish, greedy, or violent self, or in answering the pagan contradictors' argument through the Quran, a new possible form of *Jihad* was now added: *al-qital*, necessary armed resistance in the face of armed aggression and self-defense against oppressor.

All the forms of *Jihad* are, as can be seen, linked to the notion of resistance. On the level of *Qital*, armed fighting, it is so as well. At the end of the verse fighting is presented as a necessity in order to resist human beings' natural tendency for expansionism and oppression. See this verse:

Had God not checked one set of people (the oppressor) by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure, would surely have been destroyed, God will certainly aid those who aid His Cause; for verily God is most powerful Almighty. (Quran, 22 : 40)

The need for balance and regulation of forces is presented as an objective necessity, given our human nature. Absolute power for one individual, one nation, or one empire would result in the total destruction of diversity among people

and the destruction of the various places of worship (the list ending with mosques), which here symbolize the freedom of religion permitted by God, Hence, the confrontation of forces and resistance to human beings' temptation to war are presented, in an apparent paradox, as the promise of peace among human beings. This is what the other verse of the Quran confirms on a more general level:

And had God not checked one set of people (the oppressors) by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief. (Quran, 2 : 251)

Humans are, by nature, greedy for power and inclined to spread evil and to kill: the other aspect of humans, their love of good and justice.

Thus, the essence and spirit of *Jihad* is the quest and mission for peace and *Qital* is, at times, the necessary path to peace.



JIHAD

'I'll make an effort, do my best'

Graham E. Fuller, veteran political scientist and former Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the C.I.A., of United States of America, explains, the concept of *JIHAD* in Islam, in his famous book "A World without Islam".

He writes, "Theories of *Jihad* and the extensive literature around it are the functional equivalent of Christian "just war" theory; the concept is designed to define and limit the actions of Muslims in war. *Jihad* is probably the most controversial and emotive word that the West associates with Islam today; not a day goes by in the media when the word is not invoked by critics of Islam. Many observers are impatient with examinations on the origins and use of the word '*Jihad*', feeling it represents little more than rationalization of the horrific character of the jihadi challenge to Western power, to peace and stability.

In the Quran and the Hadith, *Jihad* has many meanings. The basic root of the word *Jihad* in Arabic means "effort" or "struggle." It is widely used to refer to the struggle of the individual to live a virtuous life, to uphold religious values in one's personal life, to help propagate Islam through personal effort by way of personal example and promoting the faith of Islam. In that context the word *Jihad* for Muslims retains quite positive religious associations of personal devotion toward betterment. It is also routinely used in spoken Arabic simply to mean "*I'll make an effort, do my best.*" That is the "*great Jihad*," or *personal Jihad*, as defined by the Prophet Muhammad (s).

"*Lesser Jihad*" as defined originally by the Prophet Muhammad (s), came to refer to military efforts in a context of military struggle in which the key obligations were defense and preservation of Islam and the *umma* (Muslim Community). Since the fledgling Muslim community in Medina was under siege from pagan's (person's who were not Christians, Jews, or Muslims.) forces from Makkah over repeated years of battle, the defense of the Muslim community was central to many Quranic revelations and personal concerns of the Prophet Muhammad (s). But as the early Muslim community stabilized and Islam spread over vast regions, it encountered other states and empires with which it fought to retain control over its regions.

Islamic Jurisprudence set forth lengthy rulings on rules of conduct in war, including the fact that women and children could not be targeted, that proportionately of force must be used, that civilian structures should not be without cause destroyed, that *Jihad* must be declared by a legitimate ruler or head of state, and that warfare outside of the rules of *Jihad* is not legitimate. Prophet Muhammad (s) is on record for ordering his soldiers to 'avoid harming women, children, the elderly, or people at temples, churches and monasteries.' "



GREATER JIHAD

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) nevertheless remained very accessible and constantly ready to receive the women and men who tried to understand Islam or were in quest of truth. He observed them, answered their questions, and accompanied their progress. Years later, when returning from the Hunayn war expedition, the Prophet (s) had declared: "We are back from the lesser *Jihad* [efforts, resistance, and struggle for reform] to the greater *Jihad*." A Companion asked: "What is the greater *Jihad*, Messenger of God?" He answered: "*It is fighting the self [the ego].*" For the Muslims, as for all human beings, this inner struggle was the most difficult, the most noble, and the one that required the most understanding, forgiveness, and, of course, sincerity to oneself. War and its lesser Jihad had shown how difficult it was to die for God; daily life and its greater Jihad now showed Muslims that it is even more difficult to live for God, in light, transparency, coherence, spiritual demand, patience, and peace.

II

The First Battle BADR

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had just learned that a caravan led by the Quraysh leader, Abu Sufyan was on its way back from Syria with a large quantity of goods and that most of the Quraysh clans had a share in this trading venture. The Quraysh sent an army towards Medina, in order to protect their caravan, as well as to crush the emerging power of Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad (s) set off with 313 of his Muslim Companions from Medina. They were carrying with them substantial weapons - even though they were not really fitted out for war. The Prophet (s) had asked Usman (r), who would normally have been a part of the expedition, to stay behind to look after his wife Ruqayyah (r), the Prophet's (s) daughter, who was seriously ill.

The Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan had been warned of the impending attack by his own spies. He sent an envoy to the Makkan Quraysh leaders to inform them of the danger he was in and ask for help. He immediately changed his route as well, and once he was sure that he had managed to avoid the attack,

he sent a new envoy to the Quraysh leaders to tell them that danger was over and that he no longer needed help.

However, by this time, the Quraysh leaders had already set off with more than a thousand men, and they decided, at Abu Jahal's insistence, that the expedition must go on in spite of the apparent lack of danger. Even though the confrontation might be avoided, they in their turn intended to stage a show of strength against Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Companions, who had set up their camp near Badr village, located 130 km southwest of Medina, heard that a mighty army had set off from Makkah. This meant now an army three times the size of their own force was marching towards them, with its leaders seemingly intent on fighting it out. This was war, and the Muslims were not really ready for it.

Consultations

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to consult his Companions and find out what they thought about the matter. His Companions confirmed their readiness to move forward and risk a full-scale confrontation. Al-Miqdad (r) spoke: "Go ahead, you and your Lord, and fight; and with you we shall also fight, to the right and to the left, in front of you and behind you".

This attitude comforted and pleased the Prophet (s), but this was what he could naturally have expected from the *Muhajirun* (Exiled Muslims of Makkah). It was from the *Ansar* (Muslims of Medina) that he needed explicit support, since they were not directly involved in the conflict with the Quraysh and had signed an assistance agreement binding them only in case

of War in Medina, not outside the city. Sa'ad, speaking on behalf of the Ansar, said with determination: "Do what you will, and we are with you. By He who has sent you with the truth, were you to order us to cross the sea and dive into it yourself, we would dive in with you. Not one of us would stay behind." Having thus obtained the assent of both groups, Prophet Muhammad (s) decided to move forward without allowing the Quraysh's military exercises to threaten him.

Intellectual Creativity

Here, we are presenting that dimension of Prophet Muhammad's (s) life which shows how the Prophet (s) encouraged the culture of freedom of thought and the democracy that he maintained in the collective life. It shall be examined in the context of lifestyles that the people with political and religious power maintain. It is presumed that religious heads do not need consultation because they are guided by gods, or god himself is incarnate in them. This was the situation in olden days and is practiced today too.

Throughout his mission the Prophet (s) sought his faithful Companions' advice, encouraging them to express their opinions and paying careful attention to them. Furthermore, the Prophet (s) had evolved a genuine pedagogy through which he allowed the Muslims to develop their critical faculties, express their talents, and mature in his presence.

Prophet Muhammad (s) would often ask questions on various subjects and give answers only after his companions had thought by themselves and expressed different views. Sometimes, more subtly, he would utter a judgment in a contradictory form, thereby prompting his listeners to consider

the matter more deeply. For example, he once said:

"A strong man is not a man who overcomes his enemy."

The companions mulled this over among them, and then asked him: *"Then who is a strong man?"*

The Prophet (s) surprised his audience and led them to a deeper understanding of the question with his answer:

"A strong man is a man who controls himself when he is angry."

Prophet Muhammad (s) would sometimes speak figuratively:

"Wealth does not lie in the riches you possess"

After the companions pondered over this, Muhammad (s) would elaborate:

"True wealth is the wealth of the soul."

On occasions, the Prophet's (s) statement appeared to contradict common sense or ethics,

"Help your brother, whether he is just or unjust".

The Companions could not, but wonder about the nature of the help they were to give an unjust brother: how could that be? The Prophet (s) would add:

"Prevent him (the unjust brother) from acting unjustly; such is the way for you to help him."

Both by asking questions and by formulating paradoxical or seemingly contradictory statements, the Prophet (s) stimulated his Companion's critical sense and their ability to go beyond mere blind obedience or mechanical mind-destroying imitation. This method developed the intellectual capacities necessary for consultations to be effective indeed, if they were to give useful advice, the Companions had to be intellectually

awake, bold and independent, even in the presence of a Prophet whose personality and status impressed them. By stimulating their intelligence and giving them opportunities to speak, he exercised a type of leadership that made it possible for his companions to learn to assert themselves and take initiative.

Young Hubab (r) was the most outstanding example of this. When he arrived at the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (s) set up his Camp near the first well he found. Seeing this, young Hubab (r) came to him and asked: "Was this place where we have stopped, revealed to you by God, so that we must not move either forward or backward from it, or is it an opinion and a strategy of yours, linked to war methods?" The Prophet (s) confirmed that it was his own personal opinion. Hubab (r) then suggested another plan that consisted of camping near the biggest well, the nearest to the way from which the enemy was to arrive, then blocking the other wells in the area so that the enemy could not get to the water. During the battle, the Muslims' opponents were thus bound to find themselves in difficulty. Prophet Muhammad (s) carefully listened to the explanations of this strategy from Hubab (r) and accepted it straightaway. The camp was moved and Hubab's (r) plan was implemented.

This example shows that the Companions made a distinction between Revelations the Prophet (s) received from Almighty God, which they obeyed without a second thought, and the opinions of Muhammad (s) the Man, in matter of strategy which could be deliberated, debated and improved on. The Messenger's authority in human affairs was neither oppressive nor unrestricted; he allowed his Companions a substantial role in consultation, and his teaching, as we have seen, developed the conditions for acquiring those critical and creative faculties.

Prophet Muhammad (s) gave his companions, women and men alike, the means and confidence to be independent, to dare to address and contradict him without his ever considering it as lack of respect for his status. Through this attitude, the Prophet (s) showed them his deep respect for their intelligence and for their heart: as for them, they loved their Prophet (s), their leader, for this availability, this attention, and this demand to use their abilities to the fullest.

Battle of Badr

When it had become clear that the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan's caravan had escaped and that a full scale war lay ahead, Prophet Muhammad (s) tried to discourage the Quraysh from choosing war. He sent Umar (r) to suggest to the Quraysh leaders that they should turn back and thus avoid confrontation. Some among the Quraysh also wanted to avoid war. However, nothing helped the advocates of war among the Quraysh, as they were determined and they knew that their numbers were clearly in their favor. Indeed they considered Umar's (r) attempt a sign of weakness. This was a great opportunity for them to destroy the Muslim community and get rid of Muhammad (s).

Having received all the available intelligence information Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to meet the enemy outside Medina at a place called as Badr, (319 km from Makkah and 130 km from Medina). He set out with three hundred and thirteen (313) of his followers. This small force was marshaled out of Medina with the youthful Ali (r) holding the banner of the Prophet (s). Early next morning on Saturday, March 13, 624 A.D, 17 Ramadan, second year of hijrah, the Prophet (s) divided his small force of 313 men into five sections and named their commanders and assigned them to man the

right, the left, and centre of the field. He took every possible precaution for the safety and security of his men. A small hut was set up on top of a hill so that the Prophet (s) could survey the whole scene during the battle and issue appropriate orders to his commanders. he performed his duties as commander in-chief of the army

The Muslim army patrol arrested two men who were approaching the well to draw water. They were taken to the Prophet (s) who was busy in his prayers. The Muslim soldiers interrogated both the prisoners. The prisoners said that they were from the Makkan army. The Muslim interrogators insisted that they confessed that they were part of Abu Sufyan's caravan. Later, on being interrogated again, they retracted and made a statement that they belonged to the Makkan army.

When the Prophet (s) was free after having finished his prayers, he told his Muslim soldiers:

"You beat them when they tell the truth and you leave them when they tell a lie".

Then the Prophet (s) personally interrogated them. "Who are you"? he asked. "We are men of the Makkan army", they replied. "And what is your number"? They were asked. "We do not know", they answered and they were right. "How many camels are daily sacrificed to feed your men?" "Nine on one day and ten on the other", they answered. The Prophet (s) deduced that their number would be between nine hundred and a thousand because one camel is enough to feed a hundred persons. In fact the total number was 950. They were asked questions about the names of chiefs who led various wings of the army – the right, the centre, etc. The Prophet (s) was familiar with all the names because their bearers were his compatriots.

The Makkan Quraysh led-by Abu Jahl had 950 men, while the Muslims numbered 313. The Muslims' force had no

more than two horses while the Quraysh had more than a hundred. The Muslims had a dozen pieces of armour while the Quraysh had two hundred. In every way the enemy was superior and more powerful. The Prophet (s) prostrated himself in prayer to Almighty God in his little hut and invoked His help. The prayer was poignant and indeed most moving:

*"If this small group of believers is defeated today;
then till the Day of Judgment; none will worship
you, O God!"*

The battle began with three duels involving Hamzah (r), Ali (r), and Ubaydah (r). Hamzah (r) and Ali (r) overcame their opponents, but Ubaydah was fatally wounded. Then hostilities began, and the Muslims showed such determination that the Quraysh were rapidly defeated. Although they were three times as numerous, the Quraysh could not hold back the Muslims' onslaught.

The revelation of the Quran was later to mention God's constant protection at the battle, His angels, and the fulfillment of His promise:

*God helped you at Badr, when you were
helpless. Then fear Allah [be intimately conscious
of His presence]: thus may you show your gratitude.*
(Quran 3 : 123)

This victory was a turning point. The Quraysh's status and supremacy had been seriously affected and the news of their defeat spread like wildfire throughout the Arab Peninsula.

The Muslims had lost fourteen of their men, while the Makkans had lost more than seventy, including Abu Jahl, who had been one of Islam's fiercest opponents and who had been most eager for that battle to take place. Abbas, the Prophet's (s) uncle (in whom the latter had confided in Makkah, and who

had witnessed all the preparations preceding the emigration), was among the seventy Quraysh prisoners.

In Makkah Calling For Revenge

The Quraysh's return to Makkah was painful, as most of the clans had suffered the death of a member. Some were already calling for revenge, such as Hind, who had lost her father, brother, and uncle in the battle. She swore she would drink the blood of Hamzah (r), who had killed her father and her uncle. The Quraysh leaders wasted no time in reacting, striving to set up alliances with neighboring cities and tribes in order to fight the Muslims, avenge their humiliation, and put an end to the Muslims' presence in the Arab Peninsula.

Abu-Lahab the staunch enemy of Islam, whose ill health had prevented him from taking part in the fighting, had remained in Makkah. He asked Abu Sufyan to tell him what had happened and the circumstances of the defeat. "There is no more to it than this," said Abu Sufyan. "We met the enemy and turned our backs, and they drove us in flight or took captives even as they pleased. Nor can I blame any of our folk, for we had to face not only them, but also men in white on multicolored horses between heaven and earth, and nothing could stand up against them."

While Abu Sufyan was narrating what had happened, Abu Rafi a slave who was sitting nearby, and who had so far kept his conversion to Islam secret, could not control his joy at the news of the Prophet's (s) victory; and when he heard, speak of the "men in white between heaven and earth", he exclaimed in wonder and in triumph: "Those were the Angels". Abu Lahab sprang to him and he struck Abu Rafi with a wounding blow on the face, while holding him down.

Um al-FadI, Abu Lahab's sister-in-law and Abbas's wife, who was also present and who had also secretly embraced Islam rushed on her brother-in-law and gave him a violent blow with a tent post. The deep head wound became infected in the following days and the infection eventually spread to Abu Lahab's entire body. He died within a few weeks. Both Abu Lahab and his wife had always given free rein to their hatred of Islam, and in fact the Quran had, years before, announced his fate, as well as his wife's fate (Quran, 111. Abu Lahab is the only person who is condemned by name in the Quran). Unlike some other oppressors who eventually changed their minds, neither Abu Lahab nor his wife ever showed the least sympathy for Muhammad's (s) message. Abu Lahab's death, which occurred in rejection and violence, confirmed what Revelation had announced: both of them would, to the end, remain among those who deny and rebel.

Joy and Sorrow at Medina

At Ar-Rawha', a suburb of Medina, the Muslim army was received by the joyous Medinese who had come to congratulate the Prophet (s) on the manifest victory that God had granted him. The Prophet (s) now entered Medina as a man to be counted for in a new dimension – the military field. In consequence, a large number of people of Medina embraced Islam, which added a lot to the strength, power and moral standing of the true religion.

The Prophet (s) was informed of the death of his daughter Ruquyyah (r), He had just lost his first Companions, and now he was given the news that his daughter was gone as he was returning from a victorious expedition. The blending of sorrow and joy reminded him of the fragility of life and, once more, of his essential relationship to the 'Almighty God' through hardship or success. Nothing was ever acquired to last.

The Prophet (s) encouraged the Muslims to treat the prisoners well to such an extent that the Muslims gave the prisoners their bread and ate only dates themselves.

Bargaining with the prisoners' relatives began. Some relatives came to pay their due and returned with their family member. Other prisoners were freed without any ransom, while the poorest were dealt with individually, according to their particular circumstance. For example, those of the captives who could read and write and who could not pay a ransom pledged to teach ten Medina's Muslim youth to read and write in exchange for their freedom. Once more, the Prophet (s) demonstrated the importance of 'knowledge' by means of the message he sent the members of his community: whether in peace or in war. Knowledge – learning, reading and writing – provides people with essential skills and gives them dignity. The knowledge some captives possessed was their wealth and that became their ransom.



Just at Heart

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) held one of his Companion, called Abu Lubabah (r), in great esteem, so much so that he had left him in charge of Medina when he had left for the first Badr expedition. Sometime later, a young orphan came to Muhammad (s) to complain that Abu Lubabah (r) had taken from him a palm tree that had long been his. The Prophet (s) summoned Abu Lubabah (r) and asked him to explain. An investigation showed that the palm tree did belong to Abu Lubabah (r), and the Prophet (s) judged in Lubabah's (r) favor, greatly disappointing the young orphan, who thereby lost his most precious belonging. After delivering the Judgment, Prophet Muhammad (s) privately asked Abu Lubabah (r), justice having now been rendered, requested to him to give the tree to the young orphan, for whom it was so important. Abu Lubabah (r) adamantly refused. He had gone to such lengths to assert his right of ownership that to concede to this request was unimaginable. This passion disguised his heart and sympathy. Revelation was to recall, on both the individual and collective levels, the singular nature of the spiritual elevation that makes it possible to reach beyond the consciousness of justice, that demands right, to the excellence of the heart, that offers forgiveness or gives people more than their due :

God commands justice and excellence.

(Quran, 16 : 90)


It was not a question of giving up one's right (and Abu Lubabah (r) had been justified in requiring it to be acknowledged); rather, it involved learning to sometimes reach beyond, for the sake of those reasons of the heart that teach the mind to forgive, to let go, and to give from oneself and from one's belongings, moved by shared humanity or love. Prophet Muhammad (s) was saddened by the reaction and attitude of his Companion Abu Lubabah (r), whom he held in great esteem: he realized that Abu Lubabah's (r) almost blind attachment to one of Islam's recommendations, justice, prevented him from reaching the superior level of justness of the heart: excellence, generosity, giving. Eventually, another Companion, Thabit (r) who had witnessed the scene, offered Abu Lubabah (r) an entire orchard in exchange for that single palm tree, which he then gave away to the young orphan. Prophet Muhammad (s) rejoiced at that outcome and did not resent Abu Lubabah's attitude.

Prophet Muhammad (s), later entrusted Abu Lubabah (r) with other missions, such as conveying to the Banu Qurayzah the terms of their surrender. In the siege of Banu Quraizah, Abu Lababah was sent to negotiate with the people of Banu Quraizah, but he unintentionally disclosed the secret of their killing before time. Ashamed of his behavior, he repented for this and tied himself to the pillar of the mosque for 6 days, hoping God and his Prophet (s) would forgive him his lapse and his lack of steadfastness.

One morning, when Prophet Muhammad (s) was in the house of Ume Salamah (r), he got up smiling. "May God keep you smiling for ever; what is the reason for this smile?" Ume Salamah enquired, "*The repentance of Abu Lababah is accepted.... break this news to him, if you wish.*" Prophet replied. Then Ume Salamah (r) stood at the door of her compartment

and shouted loudly, "Abu Lababah! Congratulations, your repentance is accepted." Hearing her voice, the whole town of Medina rushed towards the mosque.

Forgiveness came, and the Prophet (s) himself unfastened and untied Abu Lubabah (r). This individual experience shows that spiritual learning was never totally accomplished, that consciences were constantly being tried, and that the Prophet (s) accompanied his teaching with discipline, strictness but also with benevolence.



12

Gentleness, Caring and Loving

Irrespective of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) daily busy schedule, he remained mindful of the small details of life and of the expectations of people around him. His Companions and his wives saw him pray for hours during the night, away from the others, alone with the whispered prayers and invocations that cherished his dialogue with God. Muhammad's (s) wife Aishah (r), was impressed and surprised; "Don't you take on too much [worship] while God has already forgiven all your past and future sins?" The Prophet (s) answered *"How could I but be a thankful servant?"*

Prophet Muhammad (s) did not demand of his Companions, the worship, fasting, and meditations that he exacted of himself. On the contrary, he required that Companions ease their burden and avoid excess. To some Companions who wanted to put an end to their sexual life, prayed all night long, or fasted continuously (such as Uthman, son of Mazun or Abdullah, son of Amr), he said:

"Do not do that! Fast on some days and eat on others. Sleep part of the night, and stand in prayer another part. For your body has rights upon you,

your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, your guest has a right upon you." He once exclaimed, repeating it three times: "Woe to those who exaggerate [who are too strict]!" And on another occasion, he said: "Moderation, moderation! For only with moderation will you succeed."

He kept striving to soothe the conscience of Muslim believers who were afraid of their own weaknesses and failings. One day, the Companion Hanzalah (r) met Abu Bakr (r) and confessed to him that he was convinced of his own deep hypocrisy because he felt divided between contradictory feelings: in the Prophet's (s) presence, he almost saw paradise and hell, but when he was away from him, his wife and children and daily affairs caused him to forget. Abu Bakr (r) in his turn admitted that he experienced similar tensions. They both went to the Prophet (s) to question him about the seemingly dismal state of their spirituality. Hanzalah (r) explained the nature of his doubts, and Muhammad (s) answered:

"By He who holds my soul in His hands, if you were able to remain in the [spiritual] state in which you are when in my company, and remember God permanently, the angels would shake your hands in your beds and along your paths. But it is not so, Hanzalah : there is a time for this [devotion, remembrance] and a time for that [rest, amusement]."

Their situation had nothing to do with hypocrisy: it was merely the reality of human nature, which remembers and forgets, and which needs to remember precisely because it forgets, because human beings are not angels.

In other circumstances, Prophet Muhammad (s) would surprise his Companions by stating that the sincerity of a prayer,

an act of charity, or an act of worship found expression at the very heart of their most human needs, in the humble acknowledgement of their humanity: *"Enjoining good is charity, forbidding evil is charity. In having sexual intercourse with your spouse, there is charity."* The Companions, surprised, asked "O Messenger of God, when one of us satisfies his [sexual] desire, does he also get a reward?" Muhammad (s) replied: *"Tell me, if one of you had, had illicit intercourse, would he not have committed a sin? That is why he is rewarded for having lawful intercourse."* He thus invited them to deny or despise nothing in their humanity and taught them that the core of the matter was achieving self-control. Spirituality means both accepting and mastering one's instincts: living one's natural desire in the light of one's principles is a prayer. It is never a misdeed, nor is it hypocrisy.

The Prophet (s) hated to let his Companions nurture a pointless feeling of guilt. He kept telling them that they must never stop conversing with the Almighty God, the most Kind, and the Most Merciful, who welcomes everyone in His grace and benevolence and who loves the sincerity of hearts, which regret their misdeeds and return to Him. This is the profound meaning of *at-tawab*, offered to everyone: sincerely returning to God after a slip, a mistake, a sin. God loves that sincere return to Him and He forgives and purifies.

Prophet (s) invited all his Companions to that constant effort of gentleness and forgiveness:

"If you hear about your brother something of which you disapprove, seek from one to seventy excuses for him. If you cannot find any, convince yourselves that it is an excuse you do not know."

The faithful Companions felt that Prophet Muhammad (s) respected, understood, and loved them. Indeed, he did love them, and he told them so. Thus Prophet (s) offered both love

and spiritual teaching, and the teaching was all the more deeply assimilated because it was wrapped in that love.

Ahl As - Suffah The People of the Bench

A number of new converts to Islam who had no home and often nothing to eat had settled around the mosque, near the Prophet Muhammad's (s) house. They were poor and their survival depended on the Muslims' charity and gifts. Their number kept increasing, and they were soon called *Ahl As-Suffah* (the people of the bench). The Prophet (s) was most concerned by their situation and showed them continuous solidarity. He would listen to them, answer their questions, and look after their needs. One of the characteristics of his personality and of his teachings, as much in regard to the people of the bench as to the rest of his community, was that when the Muslims asked him about matters of spirituality, faith, education, or doubt, he would often offer different answers to the same questions, taking into account the psychological make-up, experience, and intelligence of the questioner.

Prophet Muhammad (s) lived very modestly: his dwelling was particularly bare, and he often had nothing, but a few dates left to eat. Yet he kept helping the needy around him, especially *Ahl As-Suffah*, the people of the bench.

He kept this simplicity in his life and allowed the members of his community to approach him. Prophet (s) owned nothing, and he let himself be approached by women, children, slaves, and the poorest people. He lived among them; he was one of them.

Promotion of Knowledge

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) attached great importance to the pursuit of knowledge and declared that,

"The acquisition of knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim."

"A small amount of knowledge is better than a lot of prayer."

Prophet (s) observed that,

"The superiority of a scholar over a pious person is like the superiority of the full moon over the stars."

"Angels spread out their wings for the seeker of knowledge."

Therefore, one who partakes of knowledge acquires a great fortune.

Prophet (s) also declared:

"I have been sent as a teacher".

He worked out a comprehensive scheme for the dissemination of knowledge through the establishment of schools; Al-Suffah was such an example.

The Prophet (s) himself gave a lecture or two at Al-Suffah. In spite of his increasingly important role in Medina society and of his many responsibilities, whenever possible he made it a point to teach in Al-Suffah and many Companions attended those lessons. The Prophet (s) came to the mosque, one day from his private quarters. He saw two groups of people. One was busy with rosaries and the other in learning. The

Prophet (s) commented that *'even though both were engaged in good acts, but the group which was busy in learning was better.'* Having said this, he joined the learning group. Prophet (s) also said: *"An hour spent at night acquiring knowledge is worthier than a whole sleepless night spent in worship."*

Education of Women

Prophet Muhammad (s) made no distinction between men and women with regard to the pursuit of knowledge. As and when the verse of the Quran was revealed, the Prophet used to recite them first in the assembly of men and then in the assembly of women. He also set apart one day during the week exclusively for the education of women. They would ask him all sorts of questions. The Prophet would answer them with patience and affection.

Prophet Muhammad's wife Aishah (r) is reported to have said that the women of Ansar (the native inhabitants of Medina) deserve praise and appreciation, for their modesty does not hold them back from acquiring knowledge. Quite a few women during the lifetime of the Prophet had committed the Quran to memory. Some of them used to impart instruction in Quranic exegesis. Many of them narrated and taught Hadith. Some of them issued *Fatwas* or religious edicts with the same authority as men. A lady, Umm Al-Fadl Karimah ran a school in her house. During the time of the Prophet, at least five women are reported to have known the art of reading and writing.

FATIMAH

' A Daughter '

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) daughter Fatimah (r) was very close to her father. Married to Ali (r) son of Abu Talib, the Prophet's (s) cousin, she had eventually moved near her father's dwelling and she was most devoted to the cause of the poor, including *Ahl as-Suffah*.

Three sons were born to the Prophet (s), all of whom died in infancy. His four daughters, all by his first wife, Khadijah (r), grew to adulthood. Fatimah (r) was the Prophet's (s) youngest daughter, and he was extremely attached to her. When he returned from any journey, the first thing he would do, after offering prayer in the mosque, was to visit Fatimah (r) and kiss her hand and forehead. Jumai son of 'Umayr once asked 'Aishah (r)' whom the Prophet (s) loved most. "Fatimah (r)," she replied. The Prophet (s) said: "*Fatima is part of me, so whoever angers her angers me.*"

When the Prophet (s) was at home or in public and his daughter Fatimah (r) came to him or entered the room, he would stand up and greet her, publicly showing her great respect and tenderness. Both the people of Medina and the Makkans were surprised at this behavior towards a daughter, who in their respective customs did not usually receive such treatment.

The Prophet (s) would kiss his daughter, talk to her, confide in her, and have her sit by his side, without paying attention to the remarks or even the criticisms that his behavior could give rise to. Once he kissed his grandson, Al-Hassan, Fatimah's (r) son, in front of a group of Bedouins, who were shocked. One of them, Al-Aqra son of Habis, expressed his shock and said: "I have ten children and I have never kissed any

one of them!" The Prophet (s) answered, *"He who is not generous [loving, benevolent], God is not generous [loving, benevolent] to him."* In the light of his silent example and his remarks, the Prophet (s) taught his people good manners, kindness, gentleness, respect for children, and regard for and attentiveness towards women. He was later to say: *"I have only been sent to perfect noble manners."*

Fatimah (r) received that love and the teaching of Islamic faith and tenderness from her father and spread them around her activities with the poor. One day, however, Fatimah (r) told her husband Ali (r) about her difficulties: like her father, they owned nothing, and she felt it increasingly difficult to manage her daily life, her family, and her children. Her husband Ali (r) advised her to go to her father for help; perhaps he will help. She went to see him, but she dared not to express her request, so deep was her respect for her father. When she came back silent and empty-handed, Ali (r) decided to go with her and ask for the Prophet's (s) help himself. The Prophet (s) listened to them and informed them that he could do nothing for them, that their situation was far better than that of the *Ahl As-Suffah*, (the people of bench) who urgently needed his help. They had to tolerate and be patient. They left, sad and disappointed: although they were the Prophet's (s) daughter and cousin, they could not claim any social privilege.

Late in the evening, the Prophet (s) came to their door. They wanted to get up to receive him, but Muhammad (s) entered and sat at their bedside. He whispered: *"Shall I offer you something better than what you asked me for?"* They assented, and the Prophet (s) told them: *"They are words Angel Gabriel (a.s) has taught me, and that you should repeat ten times after each prayer: 'Glory to God' [Subhan Allah], then 'Praise be to God' [al-humdu liLLah], then 'God is the Most Great' [Allahu Akbar]. Before going to bed, you should repeat each of those phrases thirty-three times."* These spiritual teachings that

have come down to us through the ages and that each Muslim now adopts as his own at the heart of his daily life. Fatimah (r), like her husband, Ali (r), was a model of piety, generosity, and love. She lived in the light of her father's spiritual teachings: getting by on little, asking everything of the One God, and giving everything of herself to others.

One day Fatimah (r), beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad (s) visited him. Replying to a query from Fatima (r), Prophet Muhammad (s) said, *"Fatimah (r), you being a daughter of Prophet shall not be under the impression that you will be granted special position in the Paradise. It will be your deeds which will decide your position."* The Prophet (s) wanted to explain that lineage with the Prophet (s) will not help anyone on the day of the Judgment. It is not the lineage with a pious person, clan or family that will take one to the heaven, but it is his or her own deeds.

Years later, by her dying father's side, she was to weep intensely when the Prophet (s) whispered in her ear that God was going to call him back to Him, that it was time for him to depart. A few minutes later, Fatima smiled happily when, Prophet (s) told her in confidence – loving confidence seems to reveal the essence of this father-daughter relationship – that she was to be the first in her family to join him.

AISHAH

‘ A Wife ’

Aishah (r), Prophet Muhammad's (s) wife, was also cherished by Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) example and conversation. Everything led to spiritual learning, and she was later to be an invaluable source of information about the Messenger's personality, attitude in private life, and public commitments. She has told how Muhammad (s) was attentive to her expectations and wishes when, while still quite young, she arrived in his home in Medina. Play was part of the lives, and Muhammad (s) never refrained from sharing in it or allowing her to satisfy her curiosity, as for instance when a delegation from Abyssinia visited him. The Abyssinians performed various games and traditional dances in the courtyard of the Prophet's (s) house, and the Prophet (s) stood on the doorstep of his dwelling, thus allowing his wife to watch the performance discreetly from behind his shoulder.

Time and again, she spoke of the particular nature of his attentiveness to her, of his expression of tenderness, and of the freedom he allowed her in her daily life. The contents of the Prophetic traditions she later reported shows to what extent Muhammad (s) spoke to her, conversed with her, and expressed his love and tenderness, in her presence, through the example of his behavior towards his wife.

Aishah (r) behaved like all other women and was most present in Medina's public life. The Prophet (s) involved her and wished his Companions to understand, through her example, the role that women, and particularly their wives, were to assume in their daily and public lives.

A Persian neighbor once invited the Prophet (s) to a meal. The Prophet (s) answered: "What about her?" pointing to his wife Aishah (r). The man replied negatively, implying that the invitation was meant for him alone. Prophet Muhammad (s) then refused the offer. The neighbor invited him again sometime later. The Prophet (s) again asked: "What about her?" The Persian answered negatively, and Prophet Muhammad (s) once more refused. The Persian invited him a third time, and when the Prophet (s) asked, "What about her?" he answered in the affirmative. The Prophet (s) accepted the invitation and went to the neighbor's with Aishah (r). Through consistently maintaining a position, the Prophet (s) was reforming customs and practice among the Arabs and Bedouins in the Arab Peninsula without attacking their conventions. Aishah (r), as well as Khadijah (r) before her, and indeed all of his wives and daughters, present in his life, was active in public life, and never confused modesty with disappearing from the social, political, economic, or even military sphere.

Prophet (s) had granted them the means to be and develop, to express themselves and be critical, and to avoid false modesty and speak of delicate subjects linked to their womanhood, their desires and expectations. Years later, Aishah (r) was to recall with respect and admiration the courage intellectual characteristic of Medina (*Ansar*) women who, unlike most Makkan women, dared to speak out and ask direct questions: "blessed be [what excellent women were] the Ansar women: modesty did not prevent them from seeking instruction [regarding their religion]."

Aishah (r) had been trained in the same way by the Prophet (s): she was present when the Quranic Revelations took place, and she remained by the Prophet's (s) side when he conveyed the message or gave recommendations and advice, or simply when he was alone and lived his religion in private. She would listen, question, and attempt to understand the reasons

and meaning of her husband's choices and attitudes. Thanks to her memory, intelligence, and critical mind, more than two thousand *Hadiths* (Prophetic Traditions) have come down to us through her, and she also repeatedly corrected the Prophetic traditions (*Hadith*) given by other Companions.

The love that the Prophet (s) and Aishah (r) showed for each other was powerful and intense. Aishah (r) remained sincere in her faith and in her love for the Prophet (s), and she became a model, as much in her holiness and devotion as in her intellectual and social commitment. She was a model in the light of the love shown to her by Prophet (s): It was in her apartment that the Prophet (s) wanted to breathe his last, and there he was buried.

13

PROPHET MUHAMMAD ' S
MERCY FOR ALL CREATIONS

In the Quran, God's pre-eminent attributes are: *Ar-Rahmaan* (the Most Gracious) and *Ar-Raheem* (the Most Merciful). When combined, these two words encompass the meanings of mercy, love, benevolence, compassion, kindness and grace. The Prophet (s) said, *"When God created all things, He wrote in the sacred book with Him in the highest heavens, 'My Mercy precedes My wrath.'"* God then states that He divided His Mercy into 100 parts, ninety-nine of which He kept with Himself and one part He sent down to Earth for the sake of all creation. By means of this single part, mercy in all created things towards one another is manifested.

Almighty God states, We have sent you [Muhammad] as a mercy for all creation, a mercy for all the worlds. (Quran, 21 : 107)

The mercy, with which God endowed the Prophet (s), is not restricted to humanity alone; rather all of creation partakes in this greatest of divine favors.

The commentators of the Quran have stated that since the Quran is the spring of all mercy in the world, it was first taught to Prophet Muhammad (s), who would be the sole carrier of the message of mercy to humanity. Thus, this verse elaborates upon the one that states that Prophet Muhammad (s) was sent as a mercy to all creation, since without him there would have been no Quran.

Both the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (s) are manifestations of God's All-Embracing Mercy. The result is a portrait of a man who, in addition to his many other qualities, embodied the ideals of compassion and mercy.

Mercy towards Birds and Animals

Prophet Muhammad's introduction of a unique and comprehensive view of mercy even now remains unprecedented. This can best be understood from the following examples from his life.

- A Companion had once taken a baby-bird from a nest which caused mother bird to search in panic for it, and suddenly mother bird attacked the companion: The Prophet (s) asked his companion to put the baby-bird back in the nest and told those companions who were present, "*God's goodness (mercy) to you is superior to that of this bird for its offspring.*"

Here, birds are a sign of God's existence, an infinite Mercy and Blessings. They constitute yet another nation.

Are you not aware that it is God whose limitless glory all (creatures) that are in the heavens and on earth extol, even the birds as they spread out their wings? Each (of them) knows indeed how to pray

unto Him and to glorify Him, and God has full knowledge of all that they do. (Quran, 24 : 41)

Drawing on this divine guidance, the Prophet (s) was extremely concerned about the welfare of birds and animals. He displayed his mercy towards all creatures (human and non-human). He taught them to observe the elements, to marvel at and draw teachings from the nature around them and the smallest creatures of life.

It is also reported that he (s) prohibited killing birds merely for pleasure and without a specific need to do so. He said, "Anyone who kills a bird without cause, this bird will come on the Day of Judgment and say, 'O God, this person killed me for pleasure and not for benefit.'"

- Consider the numerous instances of mercy the Prophet Muhammad (s) displayed towards animals and the pains he took to teach his fellow companions how to treat them properly. He states, "Some people whose hearts are like the hearts of birds (in terms of kindness and humility) will enter Paradise".

- Prophet Muhammad (s) forbade the burning of living creatures. When he once passed by an anthill that appeared to have been burnt, he asked: "*Who burnt it?*" When he was told that so and so had done it, the Prophet (s) said: "*Only the Lord has the right to punish with fire*", thereby instructing his people and protecting this vulnerable nation's well-being.

- Prophet Muhammad (s) considered even apparently harmful things in nature as part of the system that God created. Once, when the Prophet (s) was with his companions in a place called Mina near Makkah, a snake emerged from a cave and the companions tried to kill it, but it escaped. Thereupon, the Prophet (s) said, "*God saved you from its harm as He saved it from your harm.*" The Prophet's (s) statement that "*God saved it from your harm*" has a profound indication that the snake

also plays a role in the natural world. The Prophet (s) considered all creatures in the world as part of the system.

- The Prophet (s) also ceaselessly advised that the camel, another great creature of the natural world, be treated properly. The Quran asks:

"Do they not look at the camels, how they are made?" (Quran 88: 17)

The Prophet (s) came across a camel so famished to the extent that its belly had shrunk. He told those with him, *"Be conscious of God as regards such speechless creatures. If you ride them, ride them when they are healthy. When you travel a fertile country, do not deny the camels their due from the und. When you travel in a barren and dry land, cover it kly."*

Anas (r), a companion of the Prophet (s) reported, *"The prophet of God has prohibited shooting of tied or confined animals."*

These merciful teachings are present throughout Prophet's (s) life as far as animals are concerned. We have seen that when marching towards Makkah with his army, Prophet (s) had advised that a dog's puppies lying by the wayside be protected. When the Prophet (s) noticed a dog feeding its pups, he immediately ordered his companion soldier, Ju'ail (r), son of Suraga, to stand guard so that the advancing army would not disturb them. He did so until the entire army had passed. This shows the extent of concern and compassion that the Prophet (s) had in his heart for animals, for he was mindful of the predicament of that dog and her pups even while leading an army faced with enormous tasks.

- Prophet Muhammad (s) particularly loved cats but more generally, he constantly made his companions aware of the need

to respect all animals. He once told his companion this story: "A man was walking on a road in scorching heat; he saw a well and went down into it to quench his thirst. When he climbed up again, he saw a dog panting with thirst and said to himself: 'This dog is as thirsty as I was.' He went down into the well again, filled his shoe with water, and climbed up, holding it between his teeth. He gave it to the dog to drink and God rewarded him for this and forgave his sins". The Prophet (s) was then asked; "O Prophet, do we get a reward for being good to animals?" And the Prophet (s) answered: "*Any good done to a living creature gets a reward.*"

● On another occasion, Prophet Muhammad (s) said: A woman was punished for a cat, which she had imprisoned until it died. Because of this cat she went to hell. She did not give it food or drink, while she imprisoned it, nor did allow it to eat its prey". Through such traditions, the Messenger stressed that respect for animals was part of the most essential Islamic teachings. He made use of every opportunity to insist on that dimension.

● Prophet Muhammad (s) had warned: "*Whoever kills a sparrow or a bigger animal without respecting its right to exist will be accountable to God for it on the Day of Judgment*". Prophet Muhammad (s) thus taught that an animal's right to be respected, to receive the food it needs, and to be treated well could not be negotiated: it was part of the duties of human beings and should be understood as one of the conditions of their spiritual elevation.

Mercy towards Nature and Earthly Creatures Earthly Bodies

Almighty God the earth's creator, who appointed humanity as His vice-gerent on earth, demands that humanity look after it and refrain from abusing or spoiling it:

Hence, do not spread corruption on Earth after it has been so well ordered. (Quran, 7 : 56)

Almighty God further explained that earth and all of its creatures, from plants to inanimate beings, are obedient servants who are dear to Him and prostrate for His sake:

Are you not aware that before God prostrate themselves all [things and beings] that are in the heavens and all that are on earth, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees? And many human beings [submit to God consciously], whereas many [others, having defied Him,] will inevitably have to suffer [in the life to come]; and he whom God shall scorn [on Resurrection Day] will have none who could bestow honor on him: for, verily God does what He wills.

(Quran, 22 : 18)

Once again, like the seemingly trivial beings mentioned before, the inanimate earth is depicted as an intelligent being, and moreover, one that looks after humanity's affairs:

When the Earth quakes with her (last) mighty quaking, and (when) the Earth yields up her burdens, and man cries out, "What has happened to her?" – On that Day will she recount all her tidings?

(Quran 99 : 1-4)

The Prophet (s) translated these divine instructions into real-life experiences.

The Prophet (s) said: *"Earth has been made a place of worship and a source of purification for me." Even non-living things of the earth were treated as living and loving.*

Moreover, the Prophet (s) stated, *"Be merciful to all that is on Earth and He who is in Heaven will be merciful to you."*

Green Earth

Trees are useful for food, health and green – cover. They are of medicinal value. They supply wood for construction work and fuel for domestic consumption. Forests play an important role in the climate of the region. They control decibel level and soil erosion, and help rain fall.

Anas (r) narrates that the Prophet (s) had said:

"If any person plants a tree and people or other creatures of God eat of its fruits, it would be an offering on his part."

In this tradition, the excellence of planting shady trees by the side of the road, raising social forestry, parks and conservation of forests have been stressed.

The Prophet (s) once said:

"If a person cuts a tree in a desert that gives shade to passersby and animals, God will punish him or her on the Day of Judgment."

This shows how keen the Prophet (s) was to keep the earth green. The Prophet (s) brought a completely different dimension to the idea of protecting the world in which we live, as it has

rights over us and will expose our deeds to God on the Appointed Day.

Prophet (s) also said:

"If the hour of Judgment comes while one of you holds a sapling in his hand, let him hurry and plant it."

The Muslim believer's conscience must thus, to the very end, be sustained by this intimate relation with nature, to the extent that one's last gesture should be associated with the renewal of life and its cycles.

Inter - dependence of the Material and Spiritual Environments

Karen Armstrong has referred to Prophet Muhammad (s) as "a prophet for our time". Indeed, this is true in more senses than are apparent in her book. We thus see that the Prophet's (s) teachings concerning earth and her inhabitants – insects, animals, birds, trees, rocks, mountains, rivers and oceans – are everlasting in scope and nature.

Today when humanity faces the dangers of environmental disaster, ecological imbalance, the depleting of the ozone layer, global warming etc., we can no longer afford to ignore the precious treasures of wisdom embedded in the vast books of his sayings and actions.

The value and applicability of his teachings become more clear when we examine precisely how the modern world reached this self-destructive state.

Prophet Muhammad's (s) approach to the environmental crisis was not merely a preventative measure; one based upon individual human welfare, well-being, and happiness; and disregard from the life of all else in the cosmos.

Natural Resources

Nature is God's creation and its resources are His bounties to humanity. Thus, He commands us not to destroy it or even waste any part of it:

O children of Adam. Beautify yourselves for every act of worship, and eat and drink [freely], but do not waste: verily, he does not love the wasteful.

(Quran, 7 : 31)

The merciless plunder of natural resources is a vicious act against the Creator of nature and against humanity. The Prophet (s) taught his companions to be extremely conscious of using any natural or other resources. For example, he taught them to be as economical as possible when using water.

One day the Prophet (s) passed by Sa'ad, a prominent companion who was performing his ablution. Noticing his extravagant use of water, the Prophet (s) said to him, "Why such waste O Sa'ad?", "Is there waste even when performing ablution?" Sa'ad (r) asked and the Prophet (s) answered, "Yes, even when using the water of a running stream."

Water is a central element in all the teachings and ritual practices, for it represents the purification of body and heart of physical and spiritual purity.

The Prophet (s) said in this respect:

"When a believer performs ablutions and washes his face, all the sins he has committed with his eyes

are washed away; when he washes his hands, all the sins he has committed with his hands are washed away; when he washes his feet, all the sins towards which he has stepped are washed away."

The Prophet (s) taught Sa'ad and his other companions never to consider water, or any other element of nature as a simple means towards their spiritual edification; on the contrary, respecting nature and using it moderately was already in itself a spiritual exercise in their quest for the Creator.

The Prophet's (s) insistence on not wasting any natural resource, "even when using the water of a running stream" indicates that he placed respect for nature on the level of the essential principle that must regulate behavior whatever the situation and whatever the consequences.

The Quran reminds us that water is one of God's blessings:

And we send down water from the skies in accordance with a measure (set by Us), and then We cause it to soak into the earth, but behold, We are most certainly able to withdraw this (blessing).
(Quran 23 : 18)

Today, many countries face serious water shortage, these are timely reminder that we need to be thankful to the Creator, and with this in mind, be more careful how we use water in our personal lives. Thus, we all need to pay heed to these Prophetic reminders and avoid wasting anything and 'spreading corruption throughout the land.'

Mercy towards Humanity

Needless to say, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the mercy for the Universe was sent first and foremost, for human beings. As a result, his (s) mercy is perhaps most dramatically manifested in the theatre of human actions, for it encompasses the countless spectrums of human roles, men and women, parents and children, husband and wife, master and slave, rich and poor, friend and foe, neighbor and stranger and so on. He cared for every human being regardless of gender, color or creed. His heart was a flowing fountain of compassion, sympathy and tenderness. At the sight of other's tragedy, his heart would bleed and eyes would flow with tears.

Parents

Parents are regarded as the people most deserving of mercy, for the Quran connects *Tawhid* (God's Oneness) with being kind and merciful to them:

Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents.

(Quran, 17:23)

After giving commands to serve God, we have been asked to behave with kindness towards the people. In this regard parents are mentioned first.

And do good to parents. (Quran, 4:36)

At numerous places in the Quran, after the worship of God, kind behavior towards one's parents has been given prominence. It means that after God's favours, parents' favours are the greatest. They play a great role in man's existence, his birth, his up-bringing, his education and his moral and material

progress. Without parental care, his progress would have been in peril. Even the illiterate and the indigent parents sacrifice so much for their children that there is no match to it in the whole society. In the favour of the parents, we have the reflection of the favours of God. Worship in reality is to be thankful to the favour of God. Parents' status is not that of God's. So they cannot be worshipped, but they are treated with utmost respect. Kindness in treatment is the way to return their favours. The Quran has commanded us to express our thankfulness to God and parents.

Show gratitude to Me and to the parents. To me is (the final) goal. (Quran, 31 : 14)

Modern civilization has disrupted the family institution. The higher values attached to this system have also been shattered. In the process, it has affected the aged parents to a great extent. Today people are discussing what to do with the aged parents who have lost their use. How long they could be tolerated when they could no more play any useful role in making the future. The parents, who are held in contempt to-day, once had so much power over their children that they could have easily exterminated them in their infancy, but they didn't do so. The modern generation was once at the mercy of these old parents, yet they toiled and spent the sweat of their brow in bringing up their children. The Quran has commanded in particular to treat the aged parents with kindness and humility.

If one of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, or scold them, but say a generous word to them. And act humbly to them in mercy, and say: 'My Lord, have mercy on them, since they cared for me when I was small.' (Quran, 17 : 23-24)

In Islam, it is not enough that we only pray for our parents, but we should act with limitless compassion,

remembering that when we were helpless children, they preferred us to themselves. Mothers are particularly honored.

When parents reach their old age, they should be treated mercifully, with kindness and selflessness.

The strain of caring for one's parents / elders in this most difficult time of their lives is considered an honor and a blessing and an opportunity for great spiritual growth.

In Islam, serving one's parents is a duty second to prayer, and it is their right to expect it. It is considered despicable to express any irritation when, through no fault of their own, the old become difficult.

Mother

Prophet Muhammad (s) said, *"Verily, Heaven lies under the feet of our mother."*

Prophet Muhammad (s) was very keen to visit the grave of his mother Aminah, who passed away when he was six years old. Once when, he visited her grave, he cried and those with him also cried.

Muhammad (s) taught his followers that mercy and compassion towards one's parents is a high human value and tried to impress it upon their hearts and minds. Abu Hurairah (r) reported that a man asked the Prophet (s), "Who is the most deserving of friendly care from me?" He replied, *"Your mother"*. The man then asked who comes next, and the Prophet (s) replied, *"Your mother"*. The man asked a third time, and the reply again was *"Your mother"*. Finally, he asked again who was next, and this time the Prophet (s) replied, *"Your father"*.

Asma (r) says that her non-Muslim mother visited her when the Muslims had a peace treaty with the Quraysh. She

asked the Prophet (s), "My mother, who is ill-disposed towards Islam, has come to (visit) me. Should I show her affection and treat her with kindness?" The Prophet (s) replied, "Yes, *do so.*"

Prophet Muhammad (s) told his companions to treat their parents with kindness, regardless of their faith. One companion reports, "My mother who is an unbeliever, traveled from Makkah to Medina to visit me and asked something from me. I asked the Prophet (s), "My mother has come to see me and is expecting something from me. Should I heed her request?" He said, "Yes, *be kind to your mother.*"

Father

Prophet Muhammad (s) said: "*A father has no better gift for his son than inculcating in him a noble character.*"

Muhammad (s) said: "*The best things a father can give his children are refined manners and fine education.*"

Prophet (s) said: "*A man's deeds come to an end by his death but for three things: Charity that benefits posterity, fruitful knowledge and the solicitations of his children who pray for him.*"

Muhammad (s) said, "*The highest form of righteousness is for a person to be kind and generous towards his father's friend.*" In another transmission, Abbas son of Umar (r) said, "I heard the Prophet (s) say, "*It is most virtuous that a person treats his father's friends well after his father's death.*"

Kinsfolk

The Quran says:

Treat the Kinsfolk with kindness. (Quran, 4 : 36)

After the parents, Quran has mentioned the kinsfolk as they deserve our kindness the most. Kinsfolk are related to us through our parents. Maintenance of ties with one's kinsfolk makes social life pleasant. Where this is absent, social discord sets in. Sulaiman (r) son of Aamir narrates from the Prophet (s):

"To give propitiatory offering to any indigent person (who is not related) is mere offering but the same given to a relative is an offering as well as a mark of maintaining tie with one's relation."

It means spending on relations is doubly rewarded. It is a fact that man feels a natural attachment with his Kinsfolk but it is also a fact that these relationships are very fragile. Simple incidents snap these relations. Prophet (s) says that these relations should not be allowed to snap. Every attempt should be made to maintain these relations.

Abdullah (r) son of Umar narrates that the Prophet (s) had said:

'Maintaining of ties with relations does not mean that reciprocates the relations but in reality it means to mend relations when they are ruptured.'

The Elderly

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) teachings also established a high regard and respect for the elderly, and to rejuvenate in them feelings of hope and vigor during the sunset

of their lives. Anas (r) reported that the Prophet (s) said, "If a young man supports an old man because of his old age, God will definitely assign people who will respect him when he is old."

Prophet Muhammad (s) once narrated that "The Angel Gabriel (a.s) commanded me to give priority to the elderly. He taught that, 'When serving food and during ceremonies, the elderly people must be given priority over others.'" He said, 'start with the elderly while serving food.' This demonstrates what Abdullah, son of Amr (r) reported: The Prophet (s) said, "One who does not show mercy towards our young and does not respect our elderly is not part of us (are not Muslims)."

Muhammad (s) put the elderly right at the top of those who must be respected and honored. The priority remained intact even during the times of war, as the Prophet (s) ordered his commanders, "Do not kill the elderly, the children or the young, and the women."

On the day of the victory of Makkah when the Prophet (s) entered the sacred mosque, Abu Bakr (r) brought his elderly polytheistic father to meet the Prophet (s). When he saw his companion's elderly father, he asked Abu Bakr (r), "Why didn't you leave him at home? I would have gone to him." Abu Bakr (r) replied, "O Prophet of God, he should come to you, rather than you walk to him." The merciful Prophet (s) seated the elderly man in front of him and honored him. He then touched the man's chest and said, "Become a Muslim," and he did.

Women

Islam is the first religion to recognize the rights of women. Islam brought far reaching reforms in respect to the condition and status of women. For the first time in the history of human civilization, the principle of equality between the sexes was

recognized and practically put into effect. Islam provided an efficient legal frame work for the protection of her dignity and safeguards against her exploitation. The Islamic law bestows on her all the rights due to her as an independent human being.

'Best among you are those best to their families'

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) gave women her right, dignity and respect which she had never known before. She was a partner and soul mate of man. Quran declared, "Women and men are mutually complimentary to one another." The Prophet of Islam (s) stated: "The best among you is the one who is best towards his wife."

Prophet Muhammad (s) elevated women to a dignified level unheard of in the world nearly 1.5 millennium ago. The Prophet wiped off all stigma attached to women by virtue of her gender and willed in his last sermon that women be treated with respect and kindness.

A God-fearing woman can be superior to a pious man if she excels in her good deeds. No other religious book has given a spiritual position to women as high as the Holy Quran did.

. . . I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other. . . (Quran, 3:195).

Then how can we treat women as second-grade citizens?

And whoever does some good deeds, be it a man or woman, and is a Muslim, will be admitted to Paradise and they will not be wronged (even as much as) the speck on a date seed. (Quran, 4:124)

Prophet Muhammad (s) said:

"The world is replete with objects you relish. The

most pleasing among these is a virtuous woman."

"God's benevolence eyes fall on those couples who glance towards each other with love."

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) also said:

"The noblest among you is the one who treats his wife most honorably."

"Treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers," the Prophet (s) said in his last sermon.

Emancipation and Empowerment of Women

In Islam women enjoy very strong family and inheritance rights and the question of exploitation within marriage dose not arise.

Under Islamic law, women are blessed with these rights:

1. When a Muslim woman gets married, she does not surrender her maiden name, but keeps her distinct identity.
2. To be asked for consent of marriage and choice of husband-to-be.
3. In a Muslim marriage, the groom gives a dowry [Meher] to the bride herself, and not to her father: she can demand, fix, and receive dower (Meher) at the time of marriage. This becomes her own personal property to keep, invest or spend, and is not subject to the dictates of any of her male relatives.
4. To inherit from her parents along with her

brother: Muslim law of inheritance ensured equitable sharing of property by all female relatives particularly the wife, daughter, mother and sister.

5. She gets her inheritance or gift from her parents, she is absolute owner of it, and she does not have to share or give it to her husband or in-laws.

6. Thus, she is entitled to inherit husbands property as well as that of her parents.

7. To own property and to dispose it off as she chooses.

8. The Quran places on men the responsibility of protecting and maintaining all of their female relatives. It means, as well, that a man must provide for his wife and family even if she has money of her own. She is not obligated to spend any of her money towards the maintenance of her family.

9. To get divorce (*Khula*) if life is becoming impossible with the husband and he refuses to divorce her.

10. Widows can re-marry.

11. Divorcee's women can re-marry.

12. She can work and earn if she chooses to do so or if her circumstances warrant it.

All this is not by way of favour from the society which can be withdrawn any time by somebody's whims or fancy. All of it is guaranteed by the Islamic law which is permanent and beyond the modifying power of any authority on earth. Thus Islam protects the dignity of women. Women were given all these rights, this too, at a time when in the Western world they

were considered chattels and it was seriously doubted whether they possessed a soul.

To quote lady Cobbold, "It was that removed the bondage in which women were held from the very dawn of history and gave them a social standing and legal rights, such as were not granted to them in England till many centuries later."

Contrary to the popular stereotype, Islam does not confine the role of women to the four walls of the house. It places no restrictions on women who wish to take up an occupation. Prophet (s) did not discourage those women who were engaged in farming, trading and handicrafts. One of the Prophet's (s) wives, Zaynab (r), had good skills for handicrafts.

Such is the culture originated by the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Quran. Such is the plan of life outlined for man by God.

Children

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) loved children, with their innocence, gentleness and ability to be present in the moment. Close to God, close to his own heart, he remained attentive to those who primarily understood the heart's language. He kissed children, carried them on his shoulders and played with them, reaching towards their innocence, which is in its essence the expression of a permanent prayer to God. The Prophet's (s) attitude was a constant reminder of this. If his ritual prayer to God was disturbed by a baby crying, the Prophet (s) would then shorten his prayer as if to respond to the child's prayer.

Prophet Muhammad (s) drew from children his sense of play and innocence; from them he learned to look at people and the world around him with wonder. From watching children

experience beauty, he also more fully developed his sense of aesthetics.

Anas (r) said, "I have never seen anyone act more kindly towards children than God's Prophet (s). His son Ibrahim was being suckled in the neighborhood of Medina. He would go, accompanied by us, and enter the house, which was full of smoke due to the child's foster-father being a blacksmith. He would take him and kiss him and then go back." The Prophet (s) was very kind to children and called them the *"Flowers of Paradise."* He also said, *"Among the good fortunes of a man is the virtuous child."*

When anyone brought the first fruits of the season, the Prophet (s) would give it to the youngest child present. He used to greet children with a friendly kiss on the cheek or head. Once when he was greeting some children with a kiss, a Bedouin said, "You love children very much. I have ten children, and I have never kissed one of them." The Prophet (s) replied, *"What can I do if God takes away love from you?"*

One of his Companions was martyred on the battlefield, Prophet Muhammad (s) asked the man's wife to bring their children to him. The Prophet (s) then embraced them and, while crying, told them about their father's death. He asked his own family to prepare food for them because they were too grief stricken to cook food for themselves.

His love and kindness was not confined to Muslim children alone. In fact, he proclaimed each child's purity and innocence, *"Every child is born with a pure nature"*.

During a battle, some children who were accidentally caught between the opposing forces were killed. When he learned of this, the Prophet (s) was very distressed. A man said, "O God's Prophet, they were the children of non-Muslims". The Prophet (s) replied, *"Even children of non-Muslims are*

better than you. Beware! Do not kill children. Beware! Do not kill Children. Every soul is born in the nature of God."

The Prophet (s) said: *"To lie is bad, be it in jest or in earnest. Do not make false promises to young children."*

Neighbors

In the following verses of the Quran, gentleness and mercy towards neighbors has been advised.

Do good to neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, and the companions by your side.

(Quran, 4 : 36)

The people with whom we co-exist and the neighbors, with whom we have social contacts cannot be left out. They enjoy more rights than those with whom we have no such links. Here the neighbors have been classified into three categories – the neighbors who are related to us, the neighbors who are not related; and those who accidentally meet us while on travel, in offices, in schools or colleges, or in work places. Such people are also neighbours.

All the religions of the world have given importance to generous behavior towards neighbours, but Islam has not only given importance to this behavior, but has given such a wide meaning to the concept of neighbor that we cannot find its parallel elsewhere. Even brief togetherness of any kind is enough to establish their rights. If this togetherness is longer, the rights are equally more established.

Ayesha (r) and Abdullah (r), son of Umar have both narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (s) had said:

"Angel Gabriel (a.s) has emphasized generosity in treatment towards neighbors to such an extent that

I was afraid he would apportion the share of neighbors in the inheritance."

Islam not only says that neighbours should not be hurt in any way but stresses that they deserve our moral and social help. We should treat them in the noblest manner so that every member of the society could live with the confidence that he is secure amongst the well-wishers who would be at his service at any time. In this regard, Islam's attitude could be inferred from the following traditions.

Abu Hurairah (r) says that the Prophet (s) repeated thrice:

"By God, he is not a believer!"

"By God, he is not a believer!"

"By God, he is not a believer!"

When he was asked who that person was, he answered:
"Someone whose neighbor is not safe from his mischief"

This tradition makes it clear that hurting a neighbor is in contradiction to faith. In another tradition, Abdullah (r), son of Abbas says that the Prophet (s) said:

"That person is not a believer whose stomach is full and his neighbor remains starving."

It is clear from these traditions that the mark of belief is that his neighbors should be at peace with him and he should be of help to his neighbors in times of their crisis.

Poor

When it will be asked to some of the people who enter the hellfire, "What has brought you into hell fire?" They will answer, "We were not among those

who prayed, and neither did we feed the needy."

(Quran, 74 : 42-44)

Even before he was raised to the status of Prophethood, Muhammad (s) was a very hospitable person and known for his generosity. The poorest and most destitute companions, the As-Suffah (the companions of the bench), were the permanent guests of the Muslims and of the Prophet (s) himself most of the time. Once the Prophet (s) said, "anyone who has enough food for two persons should take three of them (home to feed); anyone who has enough food for four should take five of them (home to feed)." Abu Bakr (r) took three into his home, while the Prophet (s) took ten."

The Prophet (s) often prayed, "O God, keep me alive as a poor man, make me die as a poor man, and resurrect me in the company of the poor". Ayesha (r) asked, "Why, O Prophet of God?" The Prophet (s) replied, "*Because they will enter Paradise forty years before the rich.*" Then he said, "*O Ayesha (r) never turn away any needy person from your door empty handed. Give something, even if all you can give a half a date. O Ayesha (r), love the poor and bring them near to you, and God will bring you near to Him on the Day of Resurrection.*"

The Prophet (s) forcefully stated: "*The food served at a feast to which only the rich are invited and from which the poor are excluded is the dirtiest food.*"

Once a man passed by Prophet (s). He (s) asked his companions, "*What do you think about this man?*" They replied, "O God's Messenger, we think he is of the gentle people; if he asks for marriage, people will accede to his request; and if he intercedes for someone, his intercession will be accepted; and if he talks, people will listen to him attentively." After some time, another man passed by and the Prophet (s) asked his companions, "*What do you think of this man?*" they said, "He is a poor man; if he sends a message for marriage, none will

accept; if he intercedes, none will accept his intercession; and if he talks, none will listen to him." The Prophet (s) said, *"even if the world is full of people of the first type, the latter is the best of all."*

The Prophet's (s) companion Jafar (r) loved the poor, sat with them, stayed with them and talked to them. The Prophet (s) called him *Abu Al-Masakin (father of the poor)*.

Another of the Prophet's (s) Companion Sa'ad (r) was temperamentally slightly boastful and thought himself superior to the poor. The Prophet (s) spoke to him, saying, *"Whatever success and wealth you have is due to the labor of the poor."*

Slaves / Servants

Abdullah bin Umar (r) narrated that the Prophet (s) said, *"Give the laborer his wages before his sweat dries"*.

Prophet Muhammad (s) was particularly kind to slaves. He used to say, *"They are your brothers and sisters, so give them to eat what you eat and give them to wear, what you wear."*

Slaves often felt humiliated when called as slaves. The Prophet (s) advised his companions not to say, *"My slave"* or *"my slave girl"*, but *"my son"* or *"my daughter"*. He (s) also told slaves not to call their masters *"lord"*, for God alone is the Lord. He (s) was so kind to them that his last advice before he passed away was *"Fear and respect God, in the matter of slaves"*.

Prophet Muhammad (s) also said, *"These slaves are your brothers and sisters over whom God has given you temporary power. If they are not suited to your temperament, sell them. Do not be hard on God's creatures. Give them to eat what you eat, and give them to wear what you wear. Do not give them so much work that they cannot do it all. If you give them a lot of*

work, then give them a hand to finish that work."

Muhammad's (s) treatment of the people is best illustrated by his personal assistant secretary Anas (r), "I had been working for the Prophet (s) for ten years and he never snubbed me even once. He never criticized anything I did for him and he never resented if I failed to do something. He treated all his servants and dependents the same way. He never beat any of his servants.

The Disabled

The Prophet (Peace be upon him), with his overflowing compassion and love, was extremely concerned about and gave special attention to those who were physically and or mentally challenged. Throughout history until the present day, societies have unjustly neglected the disabled and weak. They were and still are, treated as outcasts, unwanted burdens on society. The Prophet (s) of mercy raised them from the abyss of misery and pity to the heights of happiness and success by teaching: "Show mercy to those on earth, and he who is in the heavens will have mercy upon you." This profound prophetic dictum encompassed the normally neglected sections of society: the blind, the deaf, and the mentally and/or physically disabled.

One of the most striking examples of this is the incident concerning a blind man named Abdullah (r), son of Makhtum, which shows that God used even the Prophet's (s) slight inattention towards the weak to instruct humanity. This blind and poor person once came to the Prophet (s) to learn something. The Prophet (s) who was talking with some Quraysh leaders in an attempt to persuade them to accept Islam ignored the blind man. As a result of this, God revealed a verse pointing to this action of the Prophet (s).

He frowned and turned away, because the blind man

had approached him. Yet for all you did know, [O Muhammad,] he might perhaps have grown in purity, or would have remained [for the truth], and helped by this reminder. Now as for him who believes himself to be self-sufficient – to him did you give your whole attention, although you are not accountable for his failure to attain to purity; but as for him who came unto you full of eagerness and in awe [of God] – him you disregarded.

(Quran, 80 : 1-10)

Afterwards, whenever Abdullah, son of Makhtum, visited the Prophet (s), the latter would give him the warmest welcome saying, *"Welcome to the one because of whom my Sustainer blamed me."* Not only that, the Prophet (s) appointed the blind man as governor of Medina twice.

Another incident took place that shows the Prophet's (s) tolerance, forgiving nature, and encompassing love. The Prophet (s) and his army were marching towards Uhud, where the Quraysh had camped while heading towards Medina to conquer it. As the Muslims passed through some farmland belonging to a blind hypocrite, the latter started abusing the Prophet (s) verbally. He took a handful of mud and told the Prophet (s) in extreme contempt: "If I knew this would not hurt others, I would throw it at you." Thereupon, the companions became enraged and were about to kill him. The Prophet (s) stopped them, saying: *"Leave him alone, do not kill him, he is blind in heart and eyes."* So, despite being in an extremely tense situation and despite the blind man's insults, the Prophet (s) was a "light-giving beacon" for all people from all walks of life.

Orphans

The rights of parents and the kinsfolk have the foremost priority. After these people, the weaker sections of society deserve our kind treatment. In this regard, the orphans and the indigent persons have been mentioned first.

The Quran says:

And treat with kindness the orphans and the indigent ones. (Quran, 4:36)

The father's or mother's demise deprives a child of love, care and sometimes economic stability which are of basic importance. So it is the responsibility of a society to take care of these orphan children, and not to allow these children to feel the loss of their fathers or mothers. Any negligence on the part of the society would not only affect their physical growth, but impair them mentally and emotionally. It is very likely that such uncared for children may harbour rebellious tendencies against such heartless society. Instead of being good citizens, they could turn into anti-social elements.

Prophet Muhammad (s) became an orphan at an early age. His father (Abdullah) died before he was born, and his mother (Aminah) died six years later. His status as an orphan had a great impact upon his life, as seen in his deep concern for orphans and their welfare throughout his life. In fact, he even considered them his own children. He was always a shade and support for them. The Prophet (s) tirelessly endeavored to raise and educate orphans so that they would be a vital part of society.

But nay, nay, [O men, consider all that you do and fail to do:] you are not generous towards the orphan, and you do not urge one another to feed the needy,

and you devour the inheritance [of others] with devouring greed, and you love wealth with boundless love. (Quran, 89 : 17-20)

The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (s) have repeatedly stressed the need to take care of these orphaned children, their educational needs and their property.

Prophet Muhammad (s) was kind to all people, but especially to orphans. He asked his companions to follow his example and be gentle with them.

Abu Hurairah (r) reported, Prophet Muhammad (s) as stating that: *"The best house among the Muslims is the one which contains an orphan who is well treated, and the worst house among the Muslims is the one which contains an orphan who is badly treated."*

And Abu Umamah (r) reported the Prophet (s) as saying: *"If anyone lovingly patted an orphan's head, doing so only for God's sake, he will have blessings for every hair over which his hand passes; and if anyone treats well an orphan girl or boy under his care, he and I shall be like these two in Paradise,"* putting two of his fingers together.

Orphans could not take care of their own rights because of their helplessness and lack of understanding. It is easy to usurp their rights. The Quran has condemned such usurpers.

Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a fire into their own bodies, they will soon be enduring a blazing fire. (Quran, 4 : 10)

Islam makes the society responsible for not only taking care of these orphaned children, but also helps them to become God-fearing and civilized citizens who would be an asset to the society.

Indigent

In the Quran, the indigent have been mentioned along with the orphans. The indigent persons are those who cannot meet their own basic needs because of their physical handicaps and economic depravities. People in economic distress should be helped so that they will not only be able to meet their basic needs, but also be able to regain economic stability. The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (s) have both repeatedly mentioned the moral and the legal rights of the indigents and the needy persons. At one place, the Quran says:

So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the way-farer. That is best for those who seek the countenance of God, and it is they who will prosper.
(Quran, 30 : 38)

The indigent and the needy persons are commonly said to be beggars. Begging is not an indication of helplessness or hard times, some people beg without any helplessness. They are not the indigent, but indigent-faced. On the contrary, there are people who are in dire need, but their self-respect prevents them from extending their hands before others. The Quran says that such persons of genuine needs are left far behind economically and they should be taken care of.

The Quran says:

The ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want, you shall know them by their [unfailing] mark: they beg not importunately [demandingly] from all and sundry.
(Quran, 2 : 273)

In one narration of Abu Hurairah (r), we find an explanation of this verse. He says, the Prophet (s) had stated:

"An indigent person is not the one who goes begging and whom you give one or two handfuls of food, or one or two date fruits, but he is the one who inspite of being helpless to meet his minimum needs, appears to be such that no one could either make out his real condition to give him any offering or a charity, nor does he stand begging from people."

In this way, attention has been drawn to these respectable, but really needy people in society.

Sick Persons

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was particularly keen on calling upon sick persons and on visiting them, he enquired about their health, sat by their side, passed his hands over the sick person's forehead and if they asked for anything to eat, he would arrange for it. He caressed the patient, pacified them and told them "God willing, you will recover soon." The moment he heard of an illness of any person, Muslim or non-Muslim, he went to see them. He even called on Abdullah, son of Ubayy, enemy of Islam and the leader of the hypocrites, when he was ill.

Girl Child

Children are gifts of God and His great blessing, but the birth of a girl child is generally seen as disgraceful. The son is preferred over a daughter. This is totally against the teachings of Islam.

Many incidents reported these days from various parts of the world give us the impression that we, at least in terms of the treatment of women, are going back to a time identical to the ignorance period, the age before the emergence of Prophet Muhammad (s).

God says in the Quran: And when the good news is given to any of them of a daughter, His face turns dark and he is filled with grief. (Quran, 16 : 58)

In Arabia, the custom of killing female children was very common. The Prophet (s) made it unlawful and cautioned parents that there would be a severe punishment for this act on the Day of Judgment. They killed their children for three reasons and the Quran has mentioned all the three. First, they sacrificed their children at the altar of their gods to please them:

And likewise those whom the unbelievers believe to have a share in Allah's Godhead have made the killing of their own religion. (Quran, 6:37)

And again, we find these words, Most surely they became losers, who, in their folly and ignorance, killed their own children and made unlawful what Allah had provided them as sustenance, falsely ascribing prohibitions to Allah. (Quran, 6 : 140)

Second, they killed their children for fear of poverty. The Quran cautioned them against this and made it absolutely unlawful for anyone to kill his children:

And you should not kill your children for fear of poverty, for We provided sustenance for them also. (Quran, 6 : 151)

And again, in chapter 17 'The Night Journey,' we find these words,

Do not kill your offspring for fear of want: for it is We Who provide for them and for you as well. Indeed their killing is a heinous excuse. (Quran, 17:1)

This verse cuts at the very root of birth control, which has been going on from ancient times to our present age. It was

the fear of want that induced people to kill their children or resort to abortion. In our age, another means has been added to these, i.e., contraception and pre-natal ultra sound imaging.

A newly born girl child was a subject of embarrassment and she was buried alive in order to avoid disgrace of having a female child, one out of every ten men was guilty of this crime. Not only men, but women also participated in the act. Mothers handed over their girl child for burial. These practices are continued in today's modern world in the form of female foeticide. According to a World Children's Report by UNICEF, boys are outnumbering girls in India, there are only 880 girls per 1000 boys in India. It also reveals the global sex ratio of 954 girls to 1000 boys. The drop in female birth rate is due to female foeticide.

The combination of a strong cultural preference for boys and pre-natal ultrasound imaging has led to couples identifying and aborting female fetuses so that their only permitted child is male.

The Quran mentions this in connection with accountability on the Day of Judgment when the murderer of the girl child will be questioned as to why they killed their daughter:

On the Day of Judgment 'When the infant girl buried alive is asked,' for what crime she was killed.

(Quran, 81 : 8 - 9)

Once a man narrated to the Prophet (s) something gruesome that he had done, following the pre-Islamic practice of female infanticide, he had taken his daughter to the desert and, after placing her in a ditch, had started to bury her alive. The innocent little girl had cried out "Daddy! Daddy!", but the man ignored her cries. The Prophet (s), visualizing this tragedy was overcome by emotions and tears.

Daughters, a Matter of Pride

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) completely rejected and condemned the attitude of the pre-Islamic Times of Ignorance when the girls were hated and the news of the birth of female child was the worst news one could ever expect in his lifetime.

The Quran says about this era,

When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain her on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury her in the dust? Ah! What an evil (choice) they decide on? (Quran, 16 : 58-59)

The Quran totally changed this attitude of parents towards their children and taught equal treatment towards them, irrespective of their sex or color. All are children and as such are entitled to the same treatment. In order to change this long established attitude of parents, the Prophet (s) actually leaned more towards female children. His love and affection for his daughter Fatimah (r) was a bright example.

There are many sayings of the Prophet (s) wherein he has promised a great reward from God for bringing up female children nicely and with care. "If anyone has a female child and does not bury her alive, or slight her, or prefer his children (i.e., the male ones) to her, God will bring him to Paradise." And, according to Aishah (r) the Prophet (s) said,

"If anyone has suffered at all respecting these girls and treats them well, they will be a covering for him from Hell."

Muhammad (s) has clearly demonstrated that a girl is not a matter of humiliation to a family. On the other hand, she is a matter of pride. A man who brings up his daughters in a proper way will be among those who have the honor of standing close to the Prophet (s) on the Day of Judgment.

Anas (r) reported God's Messenger (s) as saying,

'He, who brought up two girls properly till they grew up, he and I would come (together) (very closely) on the Day of Resurrection, and he interlaced his fingers (for explaining the point of nearness between him and that person).'

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UHUD

‘ Nothing is ever Final ’

Beyond his spiritual and social teachings, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) remained watchful of the security of Medina Muslims, and he knew that the Quraysh were preparing their revenge for their defeat at Battle of Badr. He received a letter from his uncle Abbas informing him that an army of more than three thousand men had set out towards Medina. Muhammad (s) had only about a week to think up his strategy and organize the resistance.

Prophet Muhammad (s) very quickly decided to organize a consultation meeting (*Shura*) to get his Companions' opinions on the matter. They could choose between remaining inside the city and waiting for the enemy to enter, so as to ambush them, or marching out of the city and directly facing the enemy in a nearby plain. The Prophet (s), like many of his Companions, including the unreliable Abdullah, son of Ubayy, a hypocrite, felt that they should wait for the enemy inside the city. Nevertheless, during the debates, his opinion was defeated, particularly through the opposition of the younger Companions and those who had not taken part in the Battle of Badr.

The majority had voted in favor of marching out of the city and confronting the enemy face-to-face. Prophet Muhammad (s) accepted the decision and promptly went home to put on his battle gear, for they had no time to waste. Feeling guilty and thinking that perhaps it would be better for them to obey the Prophet (s); some Companions came to him as he was walking out of his home and suggested that the decision should be reconsidered and they should act according to his opinion. Prophet Muhammad (s) refused categorically. The decision had been taken collectively, he had dressed for battle, and turning back was out of the question.

The March to Uhud

The Muslims set out towards Uhud located five kilometers north of Medina on 23 March, 625 C.E, third year of hijrah, at Mount Uhud. The Muslim army was a thousand strong, about to face an enemy of three thousand. As they were marching on, Abdullah, son of Ubayy a hypocrite decided to desert, followed by three hundred of his men. Abdullah, a hypocrite, reproached the Prophet (s) for having allowed young, inexperienced people to influence him, instead of taking the decision – which had been his own as well – to remain in Medina and wait for the enemy. His desertion was a serious matter, since it reduced to seven hundred the Muslim army, which could no longer change their strategy or turn back. Ibn Ubayy's hypocrisy was well known, and he was suspected of multiple betrayals: that decision, just before the showdown, was additional evidence of his duplicity. The Muslim army moved on, although they were now considerably weakened.

The Muslim army had to find an inconspicuous route to Uhud that would enable the army to approach the

battleground without its movements being anticipated or discovered. Once again, the Prophet (s) trusted a non-Muslim guide who answered his call. Then this guide's abilities were widely known and he led the Muslim army to their destination.

They took up their positions, and the Prophet (s) explained his fighting strategy to his troops. The archers were to stay on the hillside, while the horsemen and soldiers directly confronted the enemy in the plains.

Prophet Muhammad (s) addressed his archers:

"If you see us slain, do not come to assist us; if you see us snatched into pieces by birds, do not leave this position of yours till I send for you. Whether we win the battle or lose it, do not desert your positions, stand steadily in your position and mind that we are not attacked from your side."

The Prophet (s) ordered the archers not to leave their posts under any circumstance, whether the troops below might seem to be winning or losing, in order to prevent the Quraysh from coming round the hill and attacking the troops from behind.

This was in fact what one of the Quraysh divisions of the army tried to do at the very beginning of the first phase of the battle, but they were greeted with a shower of arrows that compelled them to move back. The strategy was working perfectly.

The Battle of Uhud

The war began and, down in the plains, the Muslim troops were gradually taking control. The Quraysh were losing ground and suffering many losses, while the Muslim army displayed remarkable courage.

Among those fighters, two women stood out for their energy and vigor: Ume Sulaym (r) and an Ansar woman called Nusaybah, who had initially come to carry water and aid the wounded, and who eventually stepped into the battle, took a sword, and fought the Quraysh. The Prophet (s) had never invited or advised women to fight, but when he saw Nusaybah's spirit and energy in the battle, he praised her behavior and prayed to God to protect her and grant her victory and success.

It was becoming clear that the Muslim army was winning, in spite of setbacks and the death of some Companions. Nevertheless, as the battle progressed, it seemed that victory could not escape the Muslims, who kept pressing forward while the Quraysh pulled back, leaving their horses and belongings behind them.

The archers, posted on the hillside, looked at the favorable turn of events, on victory close at hand, and especially on the booty that lay within reach of the soldiers who were, unlike them, fighting at the front. They forgot the Prophet's (s) orders and the injunctions of their leader, Abdullah, (r) son of Zubayr. Only a few archers stayed on the hillside, while about forty of them ran down the hill, convinced that victory was achieved and that they too were entitled to a share in the booty.

Khalid, son of Walid, a fine tactician who led one of the three Quraysh divisions, noticed the archers' move and immediately decided to sweep round the hill and attack the Muslim troops from behind. He succeeded in launching a pincer attack on the Prophet's (s) Companions that resulted in total confusion, and the Muslim army scattered in utter disorder. Some were killed and some ran away, while others kept fighting without really knowing where to strike.

Prophet Muhammad (s) was attacked, even narrowly escaped death, a stone from a sling split his upper lip and broke one of his front teeth; another blow from a rock drove two rings

of the chain-mail under his helmet into his flesh and blood poured from the gash in his forehead. He fell to the ground stunned, but was carried away to safety. Six of his helpers were killed, while the seventh was severely wounded, desperately fighting in defense of the Prophet (s).

A Rumor spread that; the Prophet (s) had been killed, which increased the chaos among Muslims. Eventually, some Companions carried him to his mount and protected him, thus enabling him to escape his attackers.

The Muslims managed to pull out of the battlefield, where it was getting increasingly difficult to see what was going on, and gathered to face the enemy again if needed. When the battle ended, there were only twenty-two dead among the Quraysh, while there were seventy dead among the Muslims.

Revenge

Hamzah (r), Prophet Muhammad's (s) uncle had been the target of Hind, wife of the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan, and had been seeking, she wanted to take revenge since the defeat at Badr. Wahshi, an Abyssinian spearman had been assigned the single task of killing Hamzah (r), and this was what he concentrated on doing. While Prophet Muhammad's (s) uncle Hamzah (r) was fighting, Wahshi drew near him and threw his spear with utmost precision, hitting Hamzah (r) and killing him instantly. Later on, Hind sought out Hamzah's (r) body on the battlefield, and after chewing on his liver, thereby fulfilling her promise to drink his blood in revenge for her relatives' deaths, she disfigured him, cutting off his ears and nose and hanging them around her neck.

The Quraysh carried away their dead and all their belongings. When the Muslims, in their turn, went back to the

battlefield, they saw that the corpses had been mutilated; The Prophet (s) was most affected at the sight of his uncle Hamzah (r).

The Prophet (s) wanted the bodies of the living as well as the dead to be respected, that no torture or mutilation be ever accepted or promoted, in the name of respect for creation and for human beings' dignity and integrity.

Archer's Disobedience

The archer's disobedience had dramatic consequences. Attracted by wealth and profit, the archers had succumbed to old practices from their pagan past. Despite being nurtured with the message of faith in the One God, justice, and detachment from worldly goods, they had suddenly forgotten everything when they saw riches within their reach. War victories were measured, in their ancient pagan tradition, by the amount of booty gained, and that past and part of themselves and of their culture, had gotten the better of their spiritual education. Consequently, the Muslims had been trapped by the strategy of a formidable man, Khalid, son of Walid, who a few years later was to convert to Islam and become the Muslim community's warrior hero. That particular moment of the Uhud encounter is rich with profound teaching: human beings can never completely overcome the culture and experience that has fashioned their past and no final judgment can ever be expressed as to future of their choices and orientation. The Muslims were caught up by an unfortunate feature of their past customs; Khalid, son of Walid, was to undergo a future conversion that would wipe out whatever judgments had been pronounced about this past. "Nothing is ever final" is a lesson in humility; "no final judgment should be passed" is a promise of hope.

SHURA

Mutual Consultation

The Muslims had gone back to Medina, wounded, deeply disappointed, by the turn of events: due to disobedience of the archers; their dead were many; Prophet Muhammad (s) and many honorable companions were wounded.

During the days that followed, Prophet Muhammad (s) received a Revelation that returned to the subject of the Battle of Uhud, and in particular the disagreements about strategic choices, the disobedience of archers, the deaths of companions, and then the Prophet's (s) attitude.

The Prophet (s) had remained composed and understanding towards the Companions who had been carried away by their desire for wealth and had disobeyed him.

The Quran relates the event and confirms what we said at the beginning of the present chapter, about the constant blending of respect for principles and the strength of gentleness in the Prophet's (s) personality:

It was by the mercy of God that you were lenient [gentle] with them, for if you had been severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you. So pardon them and ask for God's forgiveness for them; and consult them upon the conduct of affairs. Then, when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God, for God loves those who put their trust in Him. (Quran, 3 : 159)

The string of events had started with the decision taken against the Prophet's (s) opinion; then, of course, there had been

the archers' disobedience.

The Quran here confirms the principle of *Shura*, consultation, whatever the result: this Revelation is of crucial importance states that the principle of deliberation, of majority decision making, is not to be negotiated and must be respected beyond historical contingencies and human mistakes in decision.

Muslims are, therefore, those who "conduct their affairs by mutual consultation," and that principle must remain even though the ways in which it is implemented cannot fail to change over time and from place to place.

As far as the archers' disobedience is concerned, Revelation of Quran points out that the Prophet's (s) qualities of heart were what enabled him to overcome the situation and keep his Companions around him. He was neither severe nor harsh-hearted, and he did not condemn them for being carried away by the reflexive greed stemming from their past customs. Prophet Muhammad's (s) gentleness soothed the Companions, pain and enabled them to draw many lessons from that setback: God accompanied their fate in so far as they themselves felt responsible for it.



HUMILITY

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

' Humility and courtesy are themselves ways of reverencing God. '

Humility derives from the Latin word *humus*, earth. From the same root comes our name – *hominis*, human being. We are made of the earth, as it is said, and the earth we shall return. The Anglo-Saxon equivalent gives us the word *lowly*. Humility or lowliness means to acknowledge that one is a human being – no more and no less – and not God.

Almighty God says in the Quran;

Nor walk on the earth with arrogance: for you cannot break it open nor can you match the mountains in height. (Quran, 17 : 37)

And again,

And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in arrogance through the earth. Verily, God likes not each arrogant boaster. (Quran, 31 : 18)

Prophet Muhammad (s) lived in such fear of God that he was always a picture of humility.

In Medina, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) lived in the long, low, mud-brick house with open windows with a palm leaf roof that he had helped to build with his own hands. It was divided into partitions for his wives, and Prophet Muhammad (s) – again like a Bedouin ‘lord of the tent’ – had no sleeping quarters of his own. Muhammad (s) later introduced a curtain such as the one that divides the Bedouin black tent in the desert. He lived a most simple, and modest life. During the day, he was the busiest man of his era as he was Head of State, Chief Justice, Commander-in-Chief, Instructor, etc., all at once. At night, he was the most devoted man. He used to stay one to two-thirds of every night vigilant in prayers and meditation, often bursting with tears, his voice would get choked due to weeping before Almighty God to Grant him strength to discharge his duties. His furniture consisted of a woven palm mat, jugs, blankets and such simple things, although he was the king and sovereign of Arabian Peninsula. His life was so severe and simple that his wives once pressed him for worldly comforts but they never had. He never ate at a table, but always kneeling or squatting on the ground in the open air in the Bedouin manner. He used only his right hand to eat, seldom a knife. He preferred the simple dress; the clothes in which he breathed his last had many patches. The house from where light had spread to the world was in darkness because there was no oil in the lamp.

● In spite of having access to all power, Prophet Muhammad (s) left nothing behind him for his family. Neither did he leave a will. All he left behind him was the simple dictum: *“We prophets have no heirs, whatever we leave behind is to be given in alms,”* These were the words of the founder of the world’s greatest empire, knowing fully-well that it was soon to annex Asia and Africa and cross the borders of Europe.

‘ I’am like a Traveler ’

Prophet Muhammad (s) was the ruler of the Arabian Peninsula and had such a faithful band of companions, followers as would be hard to find again in the whole history of mankind. But events show that right to the very last moments of his life; his daily existence was humble in the extreme.

Umar (r), one of his close Companions, narrates how one day he went to see the Prophet (s) at his home. “When I entered his room, I saw that he was resting on a mat of date palms and had no shirt on. The marks of the mat were visible on his back. Wooden table placed in a corner and a small quantity, of barley.” On seeing this, I could not help, but weep. ‘What makes you weep?’ The Prophet (s) asked. “The Roman and Persian emperors enjoy all worldly comforts, yet you – the Messenger of God – are suffering so much’, I replied. On hearing these words, the Prophet (s) sat up and said, “*Umar, what on earth do you mean? Don’t you want those people to have the world and we to have the Hereafter?*”

● The entire state of Medina, where Prophet Muhammad (s) lived, grew wealthy in the later days of his life, yet in those days of prosperity, many days would elapse without a fire being kindled in the kitchen of the emperor of the Arabian Peninsula, his food being dates and water. His family would go hungry many nights successively because they could not get anything to eat in the evening. When Urwah (r), one of his Companions, asked the Prophet’s (s) wives, how they survived with food in such short supply, they answered that their diet consisted of dates and water. It seldom happened that the Prophet’s (s) family had enough grain in store to last out three days in succession.

● Once an Ansari lady came to Aishah (r) and saw the bed of the Prophet (s), which was a layer of a cloak. She went back and brought a bed stuffed with wool. When the Prophet (s) asked, *what it was*, Aishah (r) said, "O! God's Messenger, one Ansari lady came and saw your bed and then sent this (for you)." The Prophet (s) asked her to "*send it back*", but Aishah (r) did not send it and thought that it was better that it should remain in her house, "*By God, O Aisha, if I had wished, God would have made mountains of gold and silver for me.*" Prophet (s) said.

● One day Prophet Muhammad (s) was resting on a coarse mat, which had left marks on his body. Some of the Companions asked him, "If you permit us, we will get a soft bed for you." The Prophet (s) replied, "*What have I to do with this world? I am like a traveler, who takes some rest for a while under the shade of a tree in a burning afternoon, and then resumes his journey*".

Lenient

Aishah (r) reported that Muhammad (s) was very present and engaged in his household, that he was very thoughtful and helped with the housework, "sewed his clothes, repaired his shoes, milked his goats, and stitched his tore apparels and leather buckets. He carried loads, gave fodder to animals. If there was a servant he also worked with him and shared his labour. He himself brought provisions from the market and carried them in a sheet of cloth." Ayesha (r) also said, "The Prophet (s) was the most lenient man at home. In fact, there was no one more affectionate to his people than the Prophet."

● In the use of conveyance Muhammad (s) preferred the horse; he cleaned the eyes, nose and mouth of the horse with his own hands.

No Special Privilege

Muhammad (s) never walked ahead in front of others like a dignitary with followers. He allowed the servants or child, the dignity of leading the way.

- Muhammad (s) would never allow a seat to be reserved for him when attending a meeting, but would sit wherever there was an empty place. For Prophet Muhammad (s) said to them:

'I am a man like you. I eat food like you and I also sit down when I am tired – like you !'

- Prophet Muhammad (s) did not like the idea that people should bow before him or stand up when he arrived. He was unhappy with some people who had got up as a gesture of respect for him and admonished them for imitating the manners of foreigner. In other words, he would accept no special privileges for himself.

The true servants of the Most Gracious God are those who walk on earth with humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say 'Peace!'

(Quran, 25 : 63)

No Discrimination

On one of his journeys, Prophet Muhammad (s) asked his Companions to roast a goat. One volunteered to slaughter the animal, another to skin it, and another to cook it. The Prophet (s) said that he would collect wood. "Messenger of God," his companions protested, we will do all the work." *"I know that you will do it,"* the Prophet (s) replied, *"But that would amount to discrimination, which I don't approve of. God does not like*

His servants to assert any superiority over their Companions."

So humble was the Prophet (s) himself that he once said: "By God, I really do not know, even though I am God's messenger, what will become of me and what will become of you."

Forbearance

Once the Prophet (s) had to borrow some money from a Jew by the name of Zayd, son of Sa'nah. A few days before the date fixed for the repayment of the debt, the Jew came to demand his money back. He went up to the Prophet (s), caught hold of his clothes, and said to him harshly: "Muhammad, why don't you pay me my due? From what I know of the descendants of Muttalib, they all put off paying their debts." 'Umar (r) was with the Prophet (s) at that time. He became very angry, scolded the Jew and was on the verge of beating him up. But the Prophet (s) just kept quiet. All he said to the Jew was: "There are still three days left for me to fulfill my promise."

Then he addressed Umar (r):

*"Zayd and I deserved better treatment from you,"
'You should have told me to be better at paying my
debts, and him to be better at demanding them.
Take him with you, and pay him his due; in fact,
give him 20 sa'ahs (about forty kilos) of dates extra
because you have alarmed him with your threats.'"*

The most remarkable thing about this episode is that the Prophet (s) could still behave with such forbearance and humility even after being head of the Islamic state of Medina.

Smiling and Cordial

Prophet Muhammad (s) lived among others as an equal. No bitter criticism or provocation would make him lose his

composure. Once a desert-dweller came up to him and pulled so hard at the scarf he was wearing that it left a mark on his neck. "Muhammad!" he said. "Give me two camel-loads of goods, for the money in your possession is not yours, nor was it your father's." "Everything belongs to God," the Prophet (s) said, "*and I am His servant.*" The Prophet (s) then asked the desert-dweller "*hasn't it made you afraid, the way you treated me?*" He said 'No'. The Prophet (s) asked him, *why?* "Because I know that you do not require evil with evil," the man answered. The Prophet (s) smiled on hearing this, and had one camel-load of barley and another of dates given to him.

Compassionate

"A black woman was the sweeper of the Medina mosque. One day, failing to see her, the Prophet Muhammad (s) queried about her. He was informed that she had passed away. The Prophet (s) said: "*why didn't you inform me before ?*" Show me her grave. Standing by her grave, the Prophet (s) prayed for her."

Redemption to Mankind

Victors usually tend to be susceptible to two kinds of feeling - pride and vengeance. The Prophet (s), however, after his conquest of Makkah in 8 *Hijrah*, displayed neither of these traits. Prophet Muhammad (s) has brought redemption, salvation to mankind. His victory was that of a Prophet of God. According to Ibn Ishaq, when the Prophet entered Makkah, his head was bowed so low that people saw that his beard was touching the camel's saddle. Such was the humility of the Prophet (s), even in his hour of triumph. Standing at the door of the Kaabah, the Prophet (s) delivered an address, in the course of which he said,

"There is none worthy of being served save the One God. He has fulfilled His promise and offered

succor to His slave. ” “He alone has brought the hosts of enemies low.”

He did not, in other words, claim any credit for the victory: he attributed it entirely to God.

‘ I am servant of God ’

Once Prophet Muhammad’s (s) companion started to say, *“If it be the will of God and the will of the Prophet...”* The Prophet’s (s) face changed color in anger and became very sensitive when he heard this. *“Are you trying to equate me with God?”* he asked the man severely. Rather say: *“If God, alone, wills.”*

● The Prophet (s) said: *“You should not be as lavish in your [praise and] admiration of me as Christians were of Jesus (a.s). You may call me a slave and a Prophet of God [i.e. never as son of God nor as one possessing any divine attributes].”*

● The Prophet (s) said: *“Woe unto them that they turned the graves of their prophets into tabernacle; Do not turn my grave into a place of worship.”*

Calmness and Dignity

Prophet Muhammad (s) did not like noise and turmoil and preferred calm, dignity and order in everything that he did or undertook.

He even prohibited his followers from rushing to prayers (*salat*) and running towards the mosque.

He used to say, *“Calmness and dignity is for you.”* Once he noticed a lot of hustle and bustle, noise and chaos on the eve of *Hajj* Pilgrimage. The Prophet (s) restored order by raising his whip and said, *“Undue hurry is no virtue.”*

15

Trench, Treason and a Trick

The situation had become difficult for the Muslim community in Medina. The event of Uhud had had manifold consequences, not the least of which was their loss of prestige in the sight of the neighboring tribes, who now viewed them differently and thought them weak. The Muslims were seen as weakened, and many expeditions were being organized against them to try to take advantage of that situation. As for Prophet Muhammad (s), who was sometimes warned of planned attack on Medina, he would send his men in groups of 100 to 150 to the various tribes to pacify them or prevent an aggression.

The fourth year of *Hijrah* (626-C.E.) was largely taken up with such low-intensity local conflicts, which nevertheless served to modify (and sometimes maintain) the alliances of the balance of power in the area. This amounted to a kind of chess game between Makkan Quraysh and the Medina Muslims, they knew that a full – scale confrontation lay ahead. The Makkan Quraysh did not conceal their desire to eradicate the Muslim community from the Arab peninsula, and to that end, they kept making pacts with the neighboring tribes. Their situation was all the more difficult because the most direct commercial routes to the north, leading to Syria and Iraq by the coast, were still

watched over and controlled by Medina Muslims. The Quraysh therefore felt that they had to take swift and drastic action to liberate the routes that their caravans needed to take to go to Syria and Iraq.

The Allies

The anti-Islam tribes in the Arab Peninsula, and the Quraysh were preparing a full – scale attack to crush the Muslim community and finally put an end to Prophet Muhammad's (s) mission. The Banu Nadir tribe's, chief, Huyay, went to Makkah with Jewish leaders from Khaybar to seal an alliance with the Quraysh that left no room for doubt: Prophet Muhammad (s) and his community must be attacked and eliminated. To this end, they contacted other tribes to integrate them into the pact; the Banu Nadir, Asad, Banu Ghatafan, and Banu Sulaym joined in as an Allied force to crush Islam.

The Quraysh and allied forces assembled were considerable, and when the armies marched off towards Medina, it seemed that the Muslims were no match for them. The Quraysh army and their allies from the south were more than four thousand strong, and another army, coming from Najd in the east, and made up of various tribes, brought together more than six thousand men. The city of Medina was going to be attacked from two sides, and then encircled, by ten thousand warriors: one could hardly imagine its Muslim inhabitants coming out of Medina unharmed.

When the Quraysh armies set out, the Prophet's (s) uncle Abbas (r) secretly sent a delegation from Makkah to Medina to warn Prophet Muhammad (s) of the enemy attack. When the delegation reached Medina, the Muslims of Medina had only a month or less left to draw up a resistance strategy. They could not hope to muster more than three thousand soldiers, less than a third of the enemy force.

Inventiveness and Foreign War Technique

True to Islamic custom, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) gathered his Companions and consulted them about the situation and the plan of action they should adopt. Some felt that they must go out and meet the enemy, as they had done at Badr. Others thought that only by waiting inside the city would they have a chance to succeed, and that lessons must be drawn from the battle of Uhud. Among the Companions present was a Persian named Salman (r) (Salman Al-Farisi), whose story was special in many ways. He had long been in quest of the truth and of God, and he had traveled towards Makkah in the hope of living closer to the Prophet (s). He took part in their meetings and stood out by his dedication and devotion. When Salman Farisi (r) rose to speak, he suggested a strategy till then unknown to the Arabs: "O Messenger of God, in Persia, when we feared an attack from a cavalry, we used to dig a trench around the city. Let us dig a trench around us!" The idea was unexpected, but all the Companions liked it and they decided to implement it. They had to act fast, having only a month to dig a trench sufficiently wide and deep to prevent the enemies' horses from jumping over it. And it was so deep that no man who fell in it; could come out on his own.

This was the third major confrontation with the Quraysh, and it was also, in effect, the third strategy Prophet Muhammad (s) adopted. Badr, with the gathering around the wells, and Uhud, with the strategic use of the hill, had nothing to do with the present technique of waiting and keeping the enemy at a distance, which seemed to be the only means available to withstand the attack and possibly, if the siege lasted, to give those sheltered inside the city a chance to resist. Such

inventiveness in military strategy is revealing of the manner in which the Prophet (s) taught his Companions both deep faith and the exploitation of intellectual creativity in all circumstances: Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Companions did not hesitate to borrow a foreign war technique, suggested by a Persian companion and adapt it to their situation in Medina. The genius of people, the wisdom of nation, and healthy human creativity were integrated into their mode of thinking, without hesitation. The Prophet (s) forcefully stated: *"[Human] wisdom is the believer's lost belonging; he is the most worthy of it wherever he finds it."*

This was an invitation to study the best human thoughts and products and adopt them as part of mankind's positive heritage (*Maruf*, what is acknowledged as the common good). On a broader level, it meant showing curiosity, inventiveness, and creativity in, the management of human affairs, and this appeared not only through Prophet's (s) approach to war and its strategies but also, as we have seen, through his way of considering the world of ideas and culture.

The Trench

Medina was surrounded by houses and oasis on three sides, only one side was open. Prophet Muhammad (s) deployed 3,000 companions to dig a trench; he gave ten yards of land to everyone for digging. Trench length was 6 km, width about 10 yards and depth about 5 yards. Thus the entire work of digging and removing 3 lakh 8 thousand sq. yards of soil was accomplished in the record time of three weeks which was a unique performance in history. The resources were so poor that some digging equipments, pick-axe and baskets were taken on loan under an agreement from Banu Quraiza tribe. Working days

were long, and companions labored from dawn to sunset.

'I am a worker', Muhammad (s) said: If there was work to do – such as digging the defensive ditch, he took up a spade or pick-axe and dug with the rest of his Companions. He carried baskets of earth on his shoulders. Salman Al-Farsi (r) recalled working with a pick-axe in a ditch when a large rock obstructed him and he struggled to break it. The Prophet (s) saw his efforts and came over to help him. He took the pick-axe from his hand and gave such a blow that the rock was split in two.

Prophet Muhammad (s) seems to have been more than ready to share in any work in progress, even domestic chores. Anas (r), who worked as a servant to the Prophet (s) in his later years, recalled: 'Prophet (s) served me more than I served him! He has never been angry with me. He never treated me harshly.'

The Prophet (s) just could not sit back and watch while others worked. He took part in the work, and his Companions would hear him sometimes invoking God, sometimes reciting poems, in which they would all join. Such moments of communion through work molded their fraternity and sense of belonging, and also made it possible to give collective expression to feelings, aspirations, and hopes. Thus, when he needed to unite his Companions' energies, Prophet Muhammad (s) summoned up all the levels of their being in the world in order to perfect the unity of his community: deep faith in the One God, the poetic phrasing of feelings, the musicality of the song of emotions. From within his community, sharing their daily lives, he attested that while he was indeed at God's service, beyond time and space, he also experienced their history and their culture: he was one of them.

Brilliant Commander

The trench that was emerging as the work progressed was a great success: it would be impossible for an enemy horseman to cross it in any spot, and the Muslim archers would without difficulty be able to prevent them from undertaking any bold attempt.

The military strategist in the Prophet's (s) persona manifested itself in a more pronounced form in the build-up for the Battle of Trench. Muhammad (s) initiated several measures prior to the Battle.

Prophet Muhammad (s) rode on a horse and went about the city with a few Companions to survey the spots where the defense was weak and where the Trench should be dug. The Prophet (s) assumed the role of an engineer and personally led his followers who finished the task before the enemy could attack the city.

Knowing fully-well that digging a trench around Medina was an entirely new innovative concept for the people of the Arabian Peninsula, he saw to it that no information pertaining to it should reach the Quraysh and its allied forces who were preparing for a massive assault against the Muslims. He wanted to spring a surprise on the enemy and therefore prohibited movement of people in and out of Medina thereby sealing loopholes against the leakage of information about the Trench project. He appointed Ali (r) and other companions as commandos to keep 24 hours vigilance on the borders of Medina. He even ordered to build watch towers to maintain surveillance against the enemy.

On orders of Muhammad (s), his companions gathered all the food grains from the farm and orchards lying outside the

Medina city, so that the enemy had to rely on their own food reserves. The Prophet (s) thereby arranged to build up the stock of food grains within the city and averted the prospect of these falling in the hands of the enemy forces.

When the Quraysh armies began approaching, the Muslim army numbered 3,000. They hurried back inside the city, behind the trench, to wait for them.

Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu (Paris, France) was a Romanian writer. He writes the following in his book "*Mahomet (s).*"

The Soviet forces also adopted this strategy in their war against Germany. They either collected the produce or damaged the crops in the farms and orchards that lay in the path of the advancing German forces, lest they benefit from them or ruin them. This pertains to the 20th century. Prophet Muhammad (s) however deployed this as early as the 7th century. So when the Quraysh arrived on the border, they were taken by complete surprise. They had never met an enemy who so artfully stalled a direct engagement through a Trench. Nor had they encountered an enemy who deprived them of the produce from their fields and gardens. So the Quraysh soon ran out of food for the soldiers and fodder for their horses and camels.

The Blockade

To the south and east of Medina, the Makkan Quraysh and their allied forces estimated around 10,000 men with six hundred horses and some camels, arrived and settled around the Medina city on March 31, 627 C.E, *fourth year of hijrah*. The Quraysh were dismayed to find that the crops of the oasis had already harvested, there was nothing for the horses of army except the fodder they had brought with them. It was therefore

imperative to make an end of the Muslims as quickly as possible. With this intention, they marched towards Medina. They were surprised to see the trench, which upset their plan to encircle the city and invade it in a joint attack from all sides. The trench was indeed a war technique unknown to the Arabs, and the allied forces therefore had to find another plan of action to conquer Medina and defeat the Muslims.

Consultation began between Quraysh and their allied forces' to find the best means of shortening the siege and taking possession of Medina city. They decided that a majority of forces would gather to the north in order to mobilize the Medina forces on that side, while the rest tried to cross the trench from the unguarded south, where access seemed easier near the rocks.

Treason

The Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah mainly lived in that area; they had signed an assistance treaty with Prophet Muhammad (s), but they constituted the weak point in Medina's unity. Huyay, the chief of the Banu Nadir clan, insisted on going to the Banu Qurayzah fortress to speak to their chief, Kaab, son of Asad, and try to convince him to break his alliance with Prophet Muhammad (s). Kaab initially refused to receive Huyay, but the latter insisted so strongly that the Banu Qurayzah chief let himself be convinced, first to listen to him, then to betray the covenant made with the Medina Muslims .

This defection of Banu Qurayzah meant that the whole strategy of the Medina people collapsed, since the Banu Qurayzah alliance with the enemy opened a breach from inside and gave the enemy access to the city, which meant certain defeat and no less certain massacre for the Muslims.

The Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah agreed to join forces with the Quraysh and their allies. In the meantime, Prophet Muhammad's (s) observations of the movements of the enemy troops in the north led him to anticipate a trick, so he decided to check the reliability of his alliances with Banu Qurayzah in the south, for he knew the Banu Qurayzah were far from being all favorably inclined towards him.

Meanwhile, he heard rumors that the Banu Qurayzah chiefs had one - sidedly broken the covenant. If the news turned out to be true, not only would the Muslim army's morale collapse, but they would have little chance of winning the battle. The Prophet (s) sent two scouts whom he asked to gather intelligence and act wisely: if the rumor was baseless, they were to announce it loud and clear to reassure the Muslim troops and restore their courage; if it was true, they were to let him know discreetly. The news was true, the scouts reported, and Prophet Muhammad (s) had to react immediately. He sent Zayd (r) to the southern front with three hundred men in order to prevent any enemy attempt to get through with the Banu Qurayzah's support.

The siege was getting increasingly difficult to bear, and the Muslims had to be constantly on alert. One day, the attacks were so numerous and came from so many fronts that the Muslims could not perform the early afternoon and mid-afternoon prayers (zuhr and asr) at their respective times, nor after that, the sunset prayer (maghrib). The Prophet (s) was annoyed, and the siege was beginning to affect the Companions' morale. Revelation tells of their feelings:

When they came on you from above you and from below you [from all sides] and when the eyes swerved and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and you imagined various thoughts about God! In that situation, the Believers were tried: they were shaken

as by a tremendous shaking. (Quran, 33 : 10-11)

The trial was a difficult one, and it also revealed the sincerity and fidelity of tribes as well as individuals. Not only had the war brought to light the Banu Qurayzah clan's double-dealing, but it had also, once again, exposed the hypocrites, who were quick to think of reconsidering their commitment or even surrendering.

The Quran says:

And when the hypocrites and those in whose heart is a disease [doubt] say: 'God and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusions! (Quran, 33 : 12)

And again,

And when a section of them said: Truly our houses are bare and exposed. (Quran, 33 : 13)

Others merely wanted to escape the fighting and protect themselves, since it seemed obvious to them that the Muslims' defense would shortly give way. Resisting for days in this manner appeared impossible.

The Muslims, however, were faithful to the Prophet (s) and his example and shared his determination. It is in relation to this crisis, which brought to light the depth and sincerity of faith and of commitment to the God, that the verse about the Prophet's exemplarity was revealed:

You have indeed in the Messenger of God an example for he who hopes in [aspires to get close to] God and the Final Day and who remembers God intensely. (Quran, 33 : 21)

The meaning of the verse far transcends the circumstances of that battle. It tells of the Prophet's (s) role

and status in and for the life of every Muslim individual, but it takes on an even more powerful dimension when one remembers the circumstances of its Revelation: a besieged community, shaken, unable within the scope of human sight and intelligence to see any way out of the impending disaster, whose ranks decline away through neglect and disloyalty, and who unite around the Messenger, his faith, and his trust. Revelation confirms this:

When the Believers, saw the Confederate forces, they said:

This is what God and His Messenger had promised us, and God and His Messenger told us what was true." And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience. (Quran, 33 : 22)

An Efficient Trick

The Muslims were in serious difficulty, but as the days went by, the Quraysh and its allied forces also found themselves in a difficult position, since they did not have much food left and the nights were bitterly cold.

At that moment, Prophet Muhammad (s) received a visit from Nuyam son of Masud; a prominent elder from the Quraysh who was well respected by all the tribes in the Arab Peninsula, Nuyam, son of Masud came to tell the Prophet (s) that he had converted to Islam, but that nobody knew it so far. He placed himself at the Prophet's (s) disposal.

Ibn Hisham narrates, Nuyam was well known and respected by all the chiefs who were surrounded Medina with hostile forces. Prophet Muhammad (s) knew it and told Nuyam,

"Do what is necessary to stir up dispute among them!", "Do what you want to loosen the grip on us; war is dishonesty!"

Nuyam came up with an efficient trick. He first went to the Jewish tribe Banu Qurayzah. He advised them to demand from Quraysh to send some of their men as hostages, as a guarantee that they would not forsake the Banu Qurayzah. Leaders of Banu Qurayzah liked the idea and decided to send an envoy to the Quraysh leaders to explain their request.

Nuyam then hurried to the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan to warn him that the Banu Qurayzah were deceiving him and were in fact Prophet Muhammad's (s) allies. He declared that they were going to ask him for men as a pledge of his fidelity, but that in reality they intended to give them up to Prophet Muhammad (s) as evidence of their good faith.

When the Banu Qurayzah envoy came to Abu Sufyan and told him about the request for hostages, Abu Sufyan was convinced that Nuyam had spoken the truth and that the Banu Qurayzah were indeed deceiving him. Abu Sufyan immediately summoned Huyay, the Banu Nadir chief, and questioned him about that betrayal. Huyay, surprised and taken aback, at first did not know what to say, and Abu Sufyan thought he could see in this an acknowledgement of treachery.

The first signs of division were appearing in the Quraysh and their allied forces camp. Mutual trust reigned among some clans, while others were wary of each others. The news greatly weakened the resolution of the fighters in alliance and in league with the Quraysh.

Nearly two weeks had passed and nothing has been achieved the provisions of their armies were running out, while more and more of their horses were dying every day of hunger some camels also died. Tiredness, exhaustion and lack of food

only heightened the atmosphere of discouragement in the allied forces camp. Then a strong, bitter wind beset the plain and convinced them that it had become impossible to overcome Medina's resistance.

Prophet Muhammad (s) had been informed of the enemy troops' morale and so he sent Hudhayfah (r) to gather information during the night. Hudhayfah (r) came back with the good news of their total disarray: chaos reigned in the enemy ranks, and the cold temperatures and wind paralyzed the enemy. The men were breaking camp, and many fighters had already left.

Prophet Muhammad (s) told his Companions the good news after the Morning Prayer, when daylight confirmed that the enemy had gone. The siege, which took place in the fourth year of hijrah (627 C.E.), had lasted twenty five days, and the Confederates were going home beaten and defeated, without having fought, bearing the burden of a real as well as symbolic defeat.

The news of the Muslims' twofold victory spread though the Arab peninsula and radically transformed perceptions and power balances. Not only had the Muslims resisted an army more than ten thousand strong, but they had also shown unfailing determination.



Muslims' Generosity

The Prophet's (s) daughter Zaynab (r) had been married to Abul Al-As, who had not accepted Islam. She had initially stayed with him in Makkah, until the Prophet (s) asked her to join him in Medina with her small daughter Umamah. Zaynab (r) deeply loved her husband, but their different life choices had eventually caused them to part. However, neither of them had remarried.

A few months after the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet (s) sent an expedition to stop a rich Quraysh caravan coming from the north. Zayd (r), who commanded the Muslim horsemen, seized the caravan's goods and captured most of the men, while others managed to get away. Among the latter was Abul al-As, who decided on his journey back to Makkah to stop at Medina and pay a secret visit to his wife and daughter. This in itself was madness, but his desire to see his wife and child was stronger than his awareness of the risks incurred. He knocked on his wife's door in the dead of night, and Zaynab (r) let him in, he stayed with her.

And when dawn drew near, Zaynab (r) went to the mosque for prayer as she usually did. She entered the mosque and stood in the first line of women, just behind the men. When the Prophet (s) said the formula announcing the beginning of prayer, she took advantage of the short pause to exclaim in a

very loud voice: "O you people! I grant my protection to Abul Al-As, son of Rabi!" When the prayer was over, the Prophet (s), who had no prior knowledge of what had happened between his daughter and her husband, had the Companions confirm that they had heard the proclamation as well. He insisted that the protection granted whether by his daughter or by any other ordinary Muslim must be respected.

Prophet Muhammad (s) went to his daughter, who told him about the situation facing Abul Al-As (r), whose goods had all been taken during the recent expedition in the north and who was therefore in debt, for the said goods had been entrusted to him by people in Makkah. Muhammad (s) suggested that the people who had those goods in their possession might give them back to Abul Al-As if they wished to, and all of them complied. Some Companions advised Abul Al-As to convert to Islam and keep those belongings for himself. He refused, saying that becoming a Muslim by betraying people's trust would not have been suitable. He took all the goods, went back to Makkah, and gave each owner his due. He then came back to Medina, converted to Islam, and was reunited with Zaynab (r) and their daughter Umamah.

Thus, the first Muslims' generosity and open-handedness were plain for all to see. Like the Prophet (s), they had required nothing of Abul al-as: he was not a Muslim, he belonged to an enemy clan, and he refused to convert, but they let him go anyway, allowing him the freedom to choose and the time needed for his spiritual development. He even received – at a critical time in inter-clan relations – the Muslim community's protection.



Freedom of Expression

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) daughter Zaynab (r), spoke out publicly and forcefully on behalf of her husband Abul Al-As. She often went to the mosque which was a space open to both men and women, and nobody objected to her making a statement there, among men; in fact it was not at all uncommon for Muslim women to speak up publicly in such a manner.

Inside the mosque, the women would line up behind the men's ranks, as the postures of prayer, in its various stages, require an arrangement that preserves modesty, decency, and respect. Women prayed, studied, and expressed themselves in that space. Moreover, they found in the Prophet's (s) attitude the heart of courtesy and regard: Prophet Muhammad (s) demanded that men remain seated in order to let women leave first and without inconvenience. There was always gentleness and dignity in his behavior towards women, whom he listened to, and whose right to express themselves and set forth their opinions and arguments he acknowledged, protected, and promoted.

Later, in one such instance that is particularly famous in Muslim history, when Muslims at Medina, with their

increasing affluence, began to settle huge dowers (*Mahr*) on their daughters, Umar (r), in his capacity as caliph (a successor of Prophet Muhammad (s) as temporal and spiritual head of Islamic state), ordered that no one should demand or pay a dower *Mahr* that exceeded four hundred dirhams, and that anything in excess of this amount would be confiscated and deposited in the public treasury (*Baitul-Mal*).

After the proclamation of this ordinance, when Umar (r) came down from the pulpit, a tall old woman stood up and confidently said:

"The Quran has set no restriction on this matter; Umar has no right to set an upper limit to the dowers."

To back up her contention, she loudly recited this verse of the Quran:

*If you decide to take one wife in place of another,
even if you had given the latter a whole treasure for
dower, take not the least bit of it back: would you
take it by slander and a manifest wrong?*

(Quran, 4 : 20)

Immediately Umar (r) acknowledged his error of judgment and said: "*May God, forgive me, everyone knows better than Umar, even this Old lady.*"



Service to Mankind

From the beginning, the Quran emphasizes two things, besides the basic faith: First, man's contact with God should be firm. He should worship Him alone and should not bow his head before others. Secondly, man should behave in the most respectable manner towards his fellow human beings. He should realize the rights of the deserving people. He should meet his commitments towards his parents, the kindred, the neighbors, the orphans and the needy. If he is strong, he should not raise his hand over the weak, but should be a source of strength to them. He should guard the life, honour and property of others as he would guard his own. He should never practice deceit, but always be fair in his deals. His existence should not be troublesome to society, but should ensure comfort and peace. The Quran gives so much importance to these teachings that they have been repeated time and again. Its best example is in the Quran, chapter 17, *Bani Israil (The Night Journey)*.

God's Blessings

In this world, some people are blessed with all the comforts of life while some are deprived of these. The Quran demands that the former should help the latter.

The man who is better placed in life should be thankful to God and the best way to thank Him is to serve those who are in need of our help. In everything God has graced us with; our fellow-beings have a share in it. Without this sharing, our thanks to Him would always be incomplete. After being so abundantly blessed, if we do not serve, we would be faint-hearted.

In Islam, service to humanity has been construed to be service to God. To help the people in their needs is to help God. Turning away a person empty handed is to refuse help to God. The best way to please God is to please His creatures. The heaven would not be kind to earth if the people on the earth cease to be kind to one another. One tradition of the Prophet (s) brings out this truth very effectively.

The Prophet (s) has said: "God would say on the Day of Judgment, O Son of Adam! I was sick; nobody visited me. Many would plead: O My God! You are the Sustainer of all the worlds. When did you fall ill, and how could I visit you? Then God would say: Didn't you know a particular person was sick but you didn't visit him. Had you gone there, you would have found me. Again God would say: O Son of Adam! I asked for food but you didn't give me food. Man would plead: O Sustainer of the World! When were you hungry? God would say: Don't you remember that a person asked you for food but you didn't feed him. Had you fulfilled his need then, you would have found its returns here. Again God would say: O Son of Adam! I asked you for water, but you didn't give water? Man would say: O Sustainer of the World! When were you thirsty that I could

give you water? God would say: on that day a certain man asked for water but you refused it. Had you quenched his thirst, you would have found its returns here."

It is sufficient to highlight the significance of service to humanity that it has been equated to serving God, and any negligence in this regard is a serious lapse.

Service should be for all

Islam makes its adherents concerned, not only about Muslims, but also about every man on this earth. Bigotry teaches hatred and enmity. A man blinded in nationalistic bigotry could never be tolerant and sympathetic towards other nations. Islam is opposed to this. It considers all the creatures of God as one family. Anas (r) narrates that the Prophet (s) has said:

"All the creatures make the family of God. Among them the man who serves the family best is beloved of God."

The Quran had given a common command to serve the needy, the indigent, the handicapped, the orphans and the unfortunate. It has never said that only Muslims or a particular group should be served. It wants that the entire mankind should be served. Whether they are related to us or not, agree with us or not, they speak our language or not, all deserve to be served without any difference or distinction. Any man on this earth in affliction will not be left uncared for but would be helped to overcome his hardships, because in spite of different colors, nationality and homeland, human beings are one another's limbs as they are created from one essence. This fact is evident from some traditions of Prophet (s).

1. Jabir (r), son of Abdullah narrates that the Prophet (s) said:

"God is not merciful on a person who is not merciful towards others."

2. Abdullah (r), son of Umar (r) narrates that the Prophet had said:

"Rahman, the Merciful showers mercy on those who are merciful. Be merciful to the people of this earth, the Heaven will be merciful on you."

3. Abdullah (r), son of Masood narrates that the Prophet (s) had said:

"You would never be people of faith unless you are merciful."

The companions pleaded, *"Oh Messenger of God! Every one of us is merciful"*

Then he said:

"It does not mean the mercy that you show towards your own kith and kin, but the mercy should be for all people."

4. Abu Hurairah (r) says that some companions were sitting and the Prophet (s) came to them. He asked whether he could tell them who was a good person and who was the evil one. All were silent over the question. When he repeated the question thrice, one companion said: 'Oh Messenger of God! Please enlighten us who is good among us and who is the vile one.' He said:

"The best person amongst you is the one from whom people expect only good, and they are safe"

from his wickedness. The evil amongst you is the one from whom people do not expect any good, and they are not safe from his wickedness."

These traditions teach us to serve all creatures of God without any distinction. Islam is of the view that we should help anyone who is in need of our sympathy and help. Dividing mankind into groups and parties as one's own and others, acquaintances and strangers, co-religionists and followers of other religion in the matter of social service is against the nature and teachings of Islam.

Service is also Worship

The Quran considers worship to be the sole purpose of life.

Worship is offered to gain nearness and acceptance of God. Worship is physical as well as material. Physical worship consists of verbal utterance and bodily movements. But these can be considered as rituals. Spending one's wealth in service of humanity is also worship. At the time of helping a person, the idea of attaining nearness to God through it should be there. Man can thus feel the ecstasy of worship even in acts of material welfare.

In Islam, service to man is a mundane act, but it is real worship. To understand this reality, we have to look at the entire system of worship.

Relevance of Prayer and Zakat

Prayer is a physical form of worship and Zakat is a material form of worship. (Zakat means: purifying social tax or purifying one's wealth to gain God's blessing to make it grow in goodness); Prayer is a declaration of the magnificent and beneficent status of God on the part of man and it is also a declaration of His servitude. Zakat is a manifestation of the wealth of human kindness in man and shows that he is all ready to spend his money for others. The Quran has generally mentioned prayer alms-giving together and emphasized both Prayer (Namaz) and Zakat. Both carry equal emphasis. It views material worship to be as significant as the physical worship. Islam demands not solely the bowing of man with devotion in the court of God, but it also demands that man should grant the share of his creatures the wealth earned by him and spend it on the needy.

*And they have been commanded no more than this:
To worship Allah offering Him sincere devotion,
being true (in faith); to establish regular prayer; and
to practice regular charity; and that this is the
religion right and straight. (Quran, 98 : 5)*

16

HUDAYBIYAH Peace Wins the Battle

The victory over the Confederates (Quraysh and allied forces) had changed the situation in the Peninsula, with the power of Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Companions acknowledged. Some, such as the Persian and Byzantine (Roman) empires, were even beginning to speak of Prophet Muhammad (s) as the "powerful king of the Arabs" since they saw him as an unchallenged regional power.

Ramadan and a Dream

The month of Ramzaan had begun, and Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), as he usually did, intensified night worship and was even more attentive to the wellbeing of the poor and needy. This was a month of intense spirituality, when Prophet Muhammad (s) recited back to Angel Gabriel (a.s) all that had been revealed of the Quran, and during which he lengthened ritual prayers and performed the additional prayers of *Tarawih*.

(Eight to twenty cycles of prayer, according to the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence, performed after the last evening prayer (*Isha*) in Ramadan and during which all of the Quran revealed was recited). Invocations (*Dua*) were also constant, while women and men were requested to fast during the day, liberating themselves from the characteristics that most directly defined their humanity: drinking, eating, and satisfying their sexual desire. By controlling their natural needs, Muslims were to strive to get closer to the qualities of the divine and experience God's presence through meditation.

Beyond the body's fast, Muslims were expected to "fast" with their tongues (avoiding lies, vulgarity, and indecent remarks) and their hearts (avoiding bad feelings or thought). That spiritual discipline, as we have said, went along with additional demands as to the care and attention the poor must receive: the month of Ramadan was both the month of the Quran and that of generosity, giving, and solidarity. Muslims, whether women, men, or children, were strongly advised to pay special alms at the end of the fasting month in order to take care of the needs of all the members of the community during the days of celebration they observed. The quest for proximity to the Almighty God can only be experienced and perfected through proximity to the poor: respecting, caring for, and serving them.

During that month of Ramadan, Prophet Muhammad (s) had a surprising dream, both puzzling and rewarding. He dreamt that he entered the Kaabah sanctuary, his head shaved, holding the key to the sanctuary in his right hand. The vision was powerful, and Prophet Muhammad (s), as he usually did in such circumstances, interpreted it as a sign and a message.

The next day, he told his Companions about it and invited them to get ready to go to Makkah and perform the *Umrah* the lesser pilgrimage. (*Umrah*, can be done at any time

during the year, whereas the *Hajj* can be done only during a specific period each year).

Between twelve hundred and fourteen hundred faithful Companions undertook the journey. The danger was considerable, but the Prophet (s) did not allow the pilgrims to carry weapons (apart from the other needs of the journey) and took with him one of his wives Ume Salamah (r). They set out and at the first half, the Prophet (s) himself consecrated the camels that were to be sacrificed during the pilgrimage. As for the Makkans, they very soon heard that a convoy of Muslims was heading for Makkah, intending to visit the Kaabah. Visiting the sanctuary had, for decades, been the peninsula tribes' most legitimate right.

The Dilemma of Quraysh

The Quraysh were faced with an impossible dilemma. They did not see how they could either justify barring them from entering or, on the other hand, allow their enemy into the city, which would award the Muslims with unacceptable prestige. Quraysh decided to send their leader, Khalid, son of Walid with two hundred men to stop the Muslim pilgrims from getting near Makkah.

On the edge of the sacred territory 310 km south of Medina, in the plain of Al-Hudaybiyah, 18 km north of Makkah. At that point, the Prophet's (s) camel, Qaswa, halted and refused to go on. As had been the case when Prophet Muhammad (s) had arrived in Medina seven years ago, the Prophet (s) saw this as a sign. He had to stop and negotiate the pilgrims' entry into Makkah with the Quraysh.

The Quraysh were once more totally taken aback by the Prophet's (s) attitude which did not fit with any of their religious,

cultural, or warfare traditions. At the height of his new power, he was coming to Makkah unarmed, and thus in effect vulnerable, even though circumstances could have enabled him to attain even greater supremacy over his enemies.

Moreover, he called people to a new religion, but did not hesitate to rely on respect of the rules of Arab traditions to protect himself from their attacks, and in doing so he put the Quraysh into a dilemma, since they had to choose between their honor (respecting the rules) and the loss of their prestige (allowing the Muslims to enter Makkah) Muhammad's (s) tactical choices proved rewarding.

Negotiations

The Quraysh were determined not to allow the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage, because of the crucial symbolic stakes involved but also, of course, because they did not know what Prophet Muhammad's (s) actual intentions were. They decided to send an envoy Budayl, from the Banu Khuzaah clan, who had no quarrels with any of the clans present and could therefore act as a mediator. He went to the Prophet (s), who assured him that he had no intention of waging war, but only wanted to perform the lesser pilgrimage (*Umrah*) with his Companions and go home. He added, however, that he was ready to fight anyone who opposed their right to enter the sanctuary freely, like all the other clans and tribes. If, nevertheless, the Quraysh needed time to get ready to let the pilgrims in, they would wait at Al-Hudaybiyyah until the Quraysh had finished their preparations. Budayl returned to Makkah and suggested that the Quraysh should let the Muslims in, but Budayl's proposal got a cold reception; it was flatly rejected by the Quraysh leader, Ikrimah, son of Abu Jahl.

Four attempts at negotiation had failed, then, and the Quraysh seemed more unyielding than ever. The Prophet (s) decided he must make a last attempt by sending an envoy who enjoyed sufficient respect and protection in Makkah.

Prophet (s) eventually chose Usman (r), his son-in-law who had solid clan connections in Makkah and whom nobody, would dare attack. Usman (r) went and was indeed well received, but met with the same refusal: the Quraysh would not allow the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage. He himself could, if he wished to, perform the circumambulations around the Kaabah, but letting in Muhammad (s) and his men was out of the question. Usman (r) refused the offer. His mission had taken longer than expected, and for three days, the Prophet (s) had no news of him.

The rumor spread that Usman (r) had been killed, and this caused the Prophet (s) deep sorrow. Such an action on the part of the Quraysh – killing an envoy during the sacred month and opposing the Muslims' legitimate right to visit the Kaabah, as all other tribes were allowed to – could only be seen by the Muslims as a new declaration of war. From then on, they had to prepare for the worst.

The Pledge of Loyalty

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had all the Companions summoned, and they hurried to him. He sat at the foot of an acacia tree and asked each of the Muslims to pledge allegiance (*bayat ar-ridwan*), swearing him obedience and loyalty. Through that gesture, they explicitly stated that they would remain by the Prophet's side whatever the outcome might be. They had come to perform a pilgrimage, they were unarmed, and now they faced the very high probability of a conflict for

which they were not prepared. The affirmation of their fidelity to the Prophet (s) meant to them that they pledged not to run away and to go so far as accepting death, since the balance of forces was heavily against them. The Prophet (s) himself put his left hand in his right hand and told the assembled Muslims that this represented Usman's (r) pledge, since the latter had not returned and the Prophet (s) considered him dead.

However, just as the last of the Companions had finished giving their pledge, Usman (r) suddenly appeared. The Prophet (s) rejoiced at this, the Quraysh had not been so rash as to act in disrespect of the custom of non-violence during the sacred months. A conflict with the Quraysh thus seemed to be less likely, and the Prophet (s) was informed that Quraysh leaders had finally sent a new Quraysh envoy, Suhayl, to seal a formal agreement with the Muslims. Prophet (s) decided to receive him and examine their proposals.

However, the circumstances were now completely different, with Muhammad (s) about to start negotiations on the terms of peace between his community and the Quraysh. They had all pledged allegiances thinking that they were expressing their fidelity in a situation of conflict, and moreover one in which they were in the weak position. Now their fidelity was going to be tested through the implementation and terms of a truce in which they held a strong position. Revelation relates that pledge,

God's good pleasure was on the believers when they swore fidelity to you under the tree. (Quran, 48 : 18)

The Muslims were demanding their right. They had acquired great prestige after the latest battles, so keeping a low profile was out of the question.

Creator and creations

Years later, after the death of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), that place and acacia tree step, where Prophet (s) sat and asked each of the Muslim companions to pledge allegiance, swearing him obedience and loyalty; occupied significance among the people. Some people considered acacia tree sacred. The ill used to sit beneath the tree to get healed. When the practice of getting healed through this tree was gaining popularity and people almost started to worship that acacia tree this practice was neither preached nor practiced by Prophet Muhammad (s), it was detrimental to Islamic monotheism as the act associating the tree with God. To protect Islamic monotheism and not to deviate from the One God, Umar (r) uprooted that tree, and he said, "People have to pray to the Creator, and not to His creations." This act clearly affirms that there is no room in Islam to associate any legacy or relic of Prophet (s) with God.

The Treaty of Al - Hudaybiyah

The treaty took place between the state of Medina and the Quraysh tribe of Makkah, in March 628 C.E, 6th year of *hijrah*. Prophet Muhammad (s) received the Quraysh envoy, Suhayl, who came with two other men, Mikraz and Huwayidh. The negotiations began at some distance from the Companions, and each element in the agreement was discussed, sometimes sharply. When the terms of the treaty were at last settled, the Prophet (s) asked his cousin Ali (r), to write them down. Ali (r) naturally began writing the text with the usual formula *Bismillah-hirrahmaan-nirraheem* (In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful), but Suhayl opposed the phrase, saying that he did not know *Ar-Rahman* and that they should use the

formula *Bismika Allahumma* (In Your name, O Allah"), the only one all the Arabs knew (even polytheists used it to address their main god). Some Companions immediately retorted that changing the formula was out of the question, but the Prophet (s) intervened and told Ali (r) to write "In Your name, O God."

Then Prophet Muhammad (s) instructed Ali (r) to write on, "These are the terms of the treaty signed between Muhammad, Allah's Messenger, and Suhayl son of Amr." Suhayl again disagreed, "If we had known you to be Allah's Messenger, we would not have fought you. Write instead, "Muhammad son of Abdullah." Ali (r), who had already written the usual formula, refused to give in and maintained that he could do no such thing. The Prophet (s) asked Ali (r) to show him where the phrase was written, wiped it out himself, then asked him to add what Suhayl had requested, which meant 'Muhammad, son of Abdullah'. Ali (r) and the other Companions were shocked and could not understand the Prophet's (s) attitude.

The terms of the agreement were to alarm Muslims even more, as they looked like a series of compromises highly unfavorable to the Muslims.

The treaty was based on five essential points:

1. The Muslims should not perform their pilgrimage that year, but they would be allowed to perform pilgrimage the following year and stay for a period of three days only.
2. A ten-year truce was to be observed by both sides, and all their members would be free to travel safely in the region.
3. The terms of the treaty would immediately apply to any clan or tribe that entered into a treaty with either side.

4. Any Muslim leaving Makkah for Medina would immediately be delivered to the Makkan leaders, whereas anyone fleeing Medina and seeking protection in Makkah would be granted asylum.
5. The arms would not be taken out of the casing nor would treachery come into play.

There were some similar provisions which were apparently humiliating and seemed to be disadvantageous for the Muslims. But the Prophet (s) accepted them. He said that he had come with peaceful intentions and was willing to concede the demands of the Makkans.

Medina Between Two Enemies

The famous jurist, Sarakhsi mentions a significant point. He points out that Khaybar is situated in the north of Medina while Makkah is situated in the south. Medina was thus sandwiched between two enemies. Both Jews of Khaybar and Quraysh of Makkah were in a state of war with Muslims of Medina. Both were allies. They were obliged to help each other in case Muslims waged a war on either. The other party was bound to invade Medina in that event. If the Prophet (s) advanced towards Khaybar, the Makkans would proceed to Medina. If the Prophet (s) advances towards Makkah, the people of Medina would be vulnerable to attack from Khaybar.

Under the circumstances, a clever commander and an able politician would take the only sensible decision to make peace with one of the parties and neutralize the other. It would

be easy then to deal with the threat effectively. This was the compulsion to agree generously to the conditions of Quraysh which appeared as if they had been imposed. The crucial decision was the selection of the party with which peace had to be made. Was it to be Khaybar or Makkah? Khaybar was out of question. The Jews of Banu Nadir had been expelled from Medina. Their first demand would be to be allowed to return to the city. They were rich. Financial compensation would have no attraction for them.

The Makkans on the other hand, were near relatives of the Prophet (s) and the other emigrants who had migrated to Medina were their brothers, uncles, nephews etc. It was more appropriate to rescue these relatives instead of attacking them while leaving alone the Jews. Besides, the Makkans had been weakened by the three defeats they had already suffered at the battles of Badr, Uhud and Trench. Their economic condition had deteriorated and trade had suffered.

They could, therefore, be persuaded more easily to seek peace with Muslims. For various reasons the people of Makkah were sincerely ready to have peaceful relations with Muslims. The Prophet (s) had attempted to win over their hearts during the famine.

Next, except for one provision which was aimed at establishing their dignity and honor, the Prophet (s) accepted all other provisions of the treaty at Hudaibiyah. There is one clause written in half a line: *La islal wa la ighlal*". This was a crucial clause. Literally, it means that "the arm would not be taken out of the casing nor would treachery come into play".

The people of Makkah and the Muslims of Medina pledged that they would not attack and fight each other nor would they flout or betray the treaty through trick or treachery and conspiracy. In other words, the Makkans undertook to remain neutral in the event of a Muslims' conflict with a third

party. There would be no betrayal or treachery.

Prophet Muhammad (s) prevailed upon the Makkans to accept this lone provision of his and in return he generously gave in to all the other conditions advanced by the Makkans. He agreed to a period of peace for ten years. He allowed transit facilities to the Makkan trade caravans through Medina. In return, he demanded their neutrality in the event of a future Muslim war against a third party. Instead of proceeding to Makkah, he ordered his crestfallen Companions to be content with their pilgrimage to Hudaybiyah. They were deeply disappointed, but they carried out his command.

Unrest

The Muslim Companions were beginning to realize that after the signing of a treaty that appeared to them to be a swindle; they would have to return without visiting the Kaabah.

Umar (r) rushed to the Prophet (s) and protested sharply, with a series of questions that expressed his total dissatisfaction: "Are you not God's Prophet? Are we not right, and are our enemies not wrong? Why should we so shamefully give in against our religion's honor?" Each time, the Prophet (s) answered calmly, but that was not enough to satisfy Umar (r), who, now furious with intense anger, turned to Abu Bakr (r) for help. Abu Bakr (r) advised him to calm down, as he believed the Prophet (s) was right. Umar (r) controlled himself and kept quiet, even though he clearly remained convinced that the agreement was a humiliation.

The Muslims observing the scene felt intense sorrow: they could not understand the Prophet's (s) wisdom behind this move. The Prophet (s) had taught Muslims courage and dignity,

and now he was accepting an unfair deal obliging them to look on helplessly.

When the Prophet (s) asked his Companions to sacrifice the camels that had been sacred for the pilgrimage, initially, none of the Companions could bring themselves to comply, for the wounds and the bitterness was too deep. The Prophet (s) repeated his order three times, but nobody responded.

This was the first time that the Prophet (s) was faced with apparent disobedience from his Muslim Companions in such a collective manner. The Prophet (s) surprised, saddened and disappointed, retired into his tent and told his wife Ume Salamah (r) about what had just happened and the Companions' reluctance to sacrifice the camels.

She listened, and then suggested he should act wisely and silently. She advised him to go out without saying a word and sacrifice his own camel, merely setting the example. "O Prophet of God, you can't make these fifteen hundred men do what they don't want. Just do your own duty, which Allah has imposed on you. Go ahead and perform your own rites yourself – in an open place so that every one of them can see you. This will be sufficient." Prophet Muhammad (s) listened to her advice, which turned out to be well judged. He went to his camel, pronounced the ritual formula, and sacrificed it. When they saw this, the Companions rose one after another and did the same. Then the Prophet (s) shaved his head, and the Companions did too.

Passionate Blindness and Genius

The Muslim Companions were soon to realize that their first judgments about the treaty had been completely wrong and that they had not sufficiently appreciated the Prophet (s) deep spirituality, strict rational logic, extraordinary intelligence, and

strategic genius. He listened for signs, and when his camel had stopped at Hudaybiyah and refused to move, he had the intuition that the Muslims would not travel any further than the plain of Hudaybiyah that year. The failure of the first four negotiations and the Quraysh's stubbornness convinced him that he must be patient. He was deeply confident, in his dream, he had seen himself entering the sanctuary, and this would not fail to happen, although for the moment he could not say when.

The pledge of allegiance that had initially seemed to unite the Muslims against the enemy was thus, as we have seen, to turn into a pledge of fidelity requiring them to bear with dignity the conditions of a treaty for peace.

Moreover, when Quraysh's envoy Suhayl refused the Muslims' two habitual formulas referring to God and to Muhammad's (s) status as God's Messenger, the Prophet (s) heard his point of view and was able, at that particular moment, to shift his perspective and see things from his interlocutor's standpoint. What Suhayl was saying was perfectly true according to his outlook. It was indeed obvious that if the Quraysh had acknowledged his status as God's Messenger, they would not have fought against him; therefore, an agreement on an equal footing could not possibly state an element that would in effect acknowledge what one side held as truth while contradicting the other's position. The Companions, whose respect for the Prophet (s) was so deep, had been unable to immediately hear the other's truth, but the Prophet's attitude and his reasonable approach to the terms of the treaty were loaded with spiritual and intellectual teaching.

The point was that the heart's relation to the truth – deep spirituality – must never be allowed to turn into emotional, passionate blindness. Reason must always be called upon to analyze the situation, temper one's reaction, and help establish an attentive, logical relation to the other's position. What

appeared as an unacceptable compromise from the sole viewpoint of the Muslims' faith was fair and equitable from the double viewpoint of the respective rationalities of each of the parties drawing up the peace treaty.

Prophet Muhammad (s) could not humiliate the Quraysh in order to save the Muslim's honor and prestige, or even to take advantage of the new political situation after the Trench victory. Agreeing not to enter Makkah that year took into account the Quraysh's weakness and protected their prestige, and this contributed towards long-term peace. Such peace, which considered the general interests of both camps, was soon to turn to the Muslims' advantage.

The clauses stating that emigrants to Medina should be sent back and the Muslims leaving Medina for Makkah given asylum only marginally affected the Muslims' interests. A non-believer leaving Medina was of no use to the Muslim community, and the Muslim faith of a Makkan sent back to his clan ought not – despite the suffering – to be shaken by this forced exile.

A Clear Victory

Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) trust in God, allied to strict Passion for truth and an exceptionally sharp mind, had enabled him to establish a ten-year truce with the prospect of a visit to the Kaabah the following year. Most of the Companions, and particularly Umar (r), considered only immediate results, however, and felt this was a humiliation that could amount to nothing but a defeat. Like many others, he regretted his violent reaction against the Prophet (s), but he remained convinced that the agreement was a capitulation (a document containing the terms of surrender). On the way back, he was told that Prophet Muhammad (s) had sent for him, he was afraid the Prophet (s) was going to blame him for his inappropriate attitude

or, worse still, tell him that a verse had been revealed disapproving his behavior.

Umar (r) found the Prophet (s) with a beaming face, and the latter told him about the revelation of the verse quite different from what Umar (r) might have expected.

The Divine Word announced, *Verily We have granted you a manifest victory.* (Quran, 48 : 1)

Then it mentioned the pledge of allegiance, saying,

He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down as-sakinah (tranquility) to them, and He rewarded them with a victory near at hand. (Quran, 48 : 18)

All this was recalled in the light of Prophet Muhammad's (s) initial dream, which was therefore truthful:

Truly did God fulfill the vision for His Prophet: you shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if God wills, with minds secure, heads shaved or hair cut short, and without fear. For He knows what you do not know, and he has granted you, besides this, a victory near at hand. (Quran, 48 : 27)

The events of the recent past were presented in a manner totally at odds with the Companions' perception of them: the pledge of allegiance to prepare for war was in reality a pledge of trustworthiness for peace. The apparent defeat was presented as a 'manifest victory', and a seemingly abandoned dream was announced as a certainty in the future, 'You shall enter the Sacred Mosque'. The vast majority of Muslims had not understood, had not seen, or had been unable to perceive the prospects and hopes the treaty allowed.

The signing of the pact was therefore, once again, a privileged moment of spirituality, with an exceptional lesson

about the value of intelligence and wisdom. Listening, the ability to shift one's point of view, sensitivity to the other's dignity, and foresight were some of the qualities shown by the Prophet (s), contributing to his personality as a role model.

UME SALAMAH's Solution

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was an example too in another dimension of his life, when his Companions refused to sacrifice the camels, he went back to his wife Ume Salamah (r), who listened to him and comforted him. She showed him her trust and suggested the solution to his problem. That dialogue, and that understanding, expresses the very essence of the Prophet's (s) attitude toward his wives. As with Khadijah (r) many years earlier, he never hesitated to take time to disclose problems to the women around him, to consult them, talk with them, and adopt their opinions. At a time when the future of the whole community was playing out through visions, pledges of loyalty, and peace treaties, he returned to his wife's side and, like a simple human being, told her of his need for love, trust, and advice – an example for all human beings.

Ume Salamah (r), Pious, enterprising, and particularly beautiful, she enjoyed a considerable position and role at the Prophet's (s) side, and Aishah (r) confessed that she felt jealous of Ume Salamah (r), it seems, because the Prophet (s) listened to her and was greatly influenced by her opinions.

The Muslims had returned to Medina and daily life had resumed its course, in a far less tense atmosphere than before. The truce allowed them to lower their guard against the outside and give more attention to the Muslim community's internal affairs, developments and to spread Islam over areas not explored.



Opening Floodgates to Islam

The message of Islam had penetrated the four corners of the Arabian Peninsula. There were people in every tribe in whose hearts the Prophet's religion had found a place. Such was the pull of the Prophet's (s) personality!

A host of factors were keeping people away from joining the torrent that was headed towards Islam. Many of the clans and tribes who had realized the truth of Islam were reluctant to join it because they feared that declaration of Islam amounted to a declaration of war against the mighty Quraysh. And therefore, they were, reluctant to do anything that would earn them the Quraysh's anger. They also feared the loss of economic benefits that accrued out of their friendly relations with the Quraysh.

The Treaty of Hudaibiyah brought cheer for all such clans and tribes. The Treaty had ushered the Peninsula into a new era of peace by ending the warfare. Now the two sides were committed to end the active hostilities, maintain peace between themselves for ten years, this removed the fear of reprisals. The Quraysh would no longer be able to take reprisal against people becoming Muslims. There was now nothing to stop people from accepting Islam. It was as if a large crowd had gathered around the portals of a fort which had kept its gates



Great Lesson

The great lesson of Hdaybiyah is that one should avoid impatience and should not judge matters by appearances alone. The unfavourable Treaty of Hdaybiyah held great opportunities for the Muslims, which only people of insight could perceive; the Treaty offered a new lesson in diplomacy. The Prophet (s) used it as a means to inculcate patience among his companions and followers.

Ibn Asakir has recorded some of the comments of Abu Bakr (r) about the Treaty of Hdaybiyah. "It was the greatest Islamic victory," he said, "Though on that day people were too shortsighted to realize the secrets between Muhammad (s) and his Lord. People are impatient, but God is not. He lets matters take their course, until they reach the stage that he intends." Obviously the people want instant success in this world; it is realism which brings success in this world; but people want instant success, and they are unwilling to go through the lengthy stages it takes to achieve it.



Beyond Borders to All Rulers

In the course of the year following the treaty, the number of Muslims was to double. During those months of truce, the Prophet (s) decided to send letters to all the rulers of the neighboring empires, kingdoms, or nations, calling them to Islam. In order to authenticate the credentials of his Prophethood, a silver seal was made in which were engraved the words, "‘Muhammad’ the Messenger of God."

Thus, the King Negus of Abyssinia received a new letter from the Prophet (s) before he converted to Islam, (and he agreed to represent the Prophet (s) at his proxy wedding with Ume Habibah (r).) Muhammad (s) also wrote to Chosroes, the King of Persia, to Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor, to Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt; to Mundhir son of Sawa, king of Bahrain; and to Al-Harith, son of Abi Shimr al-Ghassani, who ruled over part of Arabia up to the outskirts of Syria.

The content of the letters was always more or less the same. The Prophet (s) introduced himself as ‘God’s Prophet to the recipients of the various letters, reminded them of God’s Oneness, and called on them to accept Islam. If they refused, he held them responsible before God for keeping their whole people in error.

The kings and rulers reacted differently to those various letters. Some (the Negus, Mundhir, son of Sawa) accepted the message, while others (Muqawqis, Heraclius) showed respect with no desire to either fight or convert, and others (al-Harith, son of Abi Shimr al-Ghassani, for instance) rejected the message and threatened to attack. Nevertheless, the message was known to all and the Muslim community was henceforth settled in Medina, acknowledged in its religious identity, and respected as a regional power. Its leader, Muhammad, son of Abdullah was the Prophet whose reign was designed by God.

The treaty of Hudaibiyah was indeed a victory and an opening to the world: the battles had taken up all the energy of the community, who sought to protect themselves, resist, and survive.

Things had now changed, and in that peaceful situation, the Prophet (s) was at last able to convey and propagate the message of Islam, the principle of God's Oneness (*at-tawhid*), which liberates human beings from possible alienation to temporal interests or powers, in order to direct them towards respect of a spiritual teaching, an ethic, and values to which they must remain faithful. Peace, which now reigned over the whole Peninsula, had transformed the situation; more and more clans could now grasp the essence of Islam's message. Some converted, others respected Islam without embracing it, others fought it, but with full awareness, and not merely for matters of domination, wealth, and power relations.

Impact on Indians during Prophet's (s) Period

Bazan

A ruler of Indian origin near the Baluchistan Coast whose realm extended to the Islands in the Arabian Sea and who had to obey the commands of the Persian King embraced Islam as soon as he learnt about the killing of the Persian King in 628 A.D. Traditions and other narrations show that all his troops, mostly Indians also embraced Islam. Most probably, Bazan was one of the princes of Pulkesen.

Sarbatik, the King of Kannauj

According to Abu Saeed Muzaffar, Hafiz, son of Hajhm "Sarbatik" who claimed to be the king of Kannauj said that he met the Prophet (s) thrice. Twice in Makkah and once in Medina. He embraced Islam. He said that the Prophet (s) was extremely handsome.

Baba Ratn

He was an ascetic from Bhatinda, Punjab. He also claimed to have seen the Prophet (s) and he embraced Islam during the era of the Prophethood.

Samri, the King of Malabar

The King of Samri of Malabar reportedly saw the great event of the moon being split apart by Prophet Muhammad (s). It prompted him to learn about the Prophet (s), He visited Arabia and embraced Islam at the hand of the Prophet (s), and he died on his way back to India. He bestowed his successors all possible help to the Muslims which helped thousands, to embrace Islam in the west coast.

I7

Prophet Muhammad (s) WITH NON - MUSLIMS

Islam recommends co-operation, interaction, dialogue and tolerance in the human society. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) maintained socio-cultural, economic, and political co-operation with non-Muslims; he continued co-operating with them on all national, community and cultural issues. The Prophet's (s) excellent behavior mercy was for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some important points of these issues are discussed below in order to highlight the Islamic stance in the human society.

Relations with NON - MUSLIMS OF MAKKAH

Non - Muslims Trade Partners

Since his youth Prophet Muhammad (s) was engaged in trading on partnership basis. He used to take the goods of Makkan businessmen to Syria and Yemen and received a share in the profits. After his marriage to the wealthy widow Khadijah (r), the husband and wife had a joint business venture. After

assuming the office of messenger-ship he devoted himself fully to the cause of Islam. He did not have any time to carry on trade. Therefore, he sent his goods through leading Quraysh traders and non-Quraysh brokers to the markets. This improved his financial position. As a part of his trading activity the Prophet Muhammad (s) had sent his goods through a non-Muslim, Abu Sufyan, to Syria and reaped rich dividends. He had trust in Abu Sufyan's integrity as a trader and his business acumen. Even after learning about the Prophet Muhammad's (s) Islamic mission, Abu Sufyan did not abandon his trade or social links with Prophet (s).

Ibn Kathir has narrated; Once Abu Sufyan went on a business trip to Syria and Yemen along with his friend Umayya and returned to Makkah after five months. People called on him in order to find out about their investments. The Prophet Muhammad (s), too, visited him while Abu Sufyan's wife Hind was playing with her children. The Prophet (s) greeted Abu Sufyan and felicitated him on his safe return. He discussed with him about his travel and stay there but asked him no question about his share, when he returned, Abu Sufyan told Hind, 'I marvel at this man. I do like him. Every Quraysh who had given me his goods enquired about them. However, Muhammad did not ask me any questions.' A little later Abu Sufyan went to the Kaabah and met Prophet Muhammad (s) there. He told him about the profit he had made and asked him to take it from him. Abu Sufyan refused to take the commission which he usually charged. The Prophet (s) however, declined this offer, Abu Sufyan obliged on taking the standard commission.

Later, at that time when the Prophet (s) was engaged in preaching Islam privately, Abu Sufyan returned from his trade journey to Syria. He had carried there the goods of the Prophet (s) and of other persons as well. When Prophet (s) learnt about it, he said that Abu Sufyan would act honestly in trading matters.

Trade Links

The economy is the core of the social life of a society. Wealth is like the blood supply that sustains the entire community. If people are not financially sound or are dependent upon others, their life tends to be more difficult. Muhammad (s) and some Makkan Muslims were essentially traders and knew well the significance of wealth in economic, social and community life.

Prophet Muhammad (s) and his companion traders resolved to stand on their feet and to improve their economic life. They drew up a plan for their trade activities and acted on it systematically.

Apart from Abu Sufyan, his trading partner, Prophet (s) had trade links with other Quraysh and Arab tribal traders. Among the non-Muslims his prominent trade partners were Hakim, 'Abdullah (son of Abi Hamsa), Al-Taymi, Al-Sa'ib and Quys. Al-Baghdadi and other writers on the Prophet's (s) life have written extensively on the Quraysh trade partners. Al-Baghdadi speaks of fifty-eight Muslim and non-Muslim trading partners.

Among the companions Abdul ar-Rehman ibn Awf, had non-Muslim partner. His close friend and partner was Umayya ibn Khalaf, a leading Makkan businessman, opposed to Islam. Al-Walid, son of the Quraysh chief Utbah was friend and trade partner of Abbas. Uthman and Rabi'ah ibn Harith had been friends and trade partners. Abbas and Abu Sufyan were good partners. They remained close friends, partners and associates until their death. Wars did no dent their ties. Nor did religious differences estrange them.

Matrimonial Alliances

In the Makkan period an outstanding instance of the matrimonial tie between Muslims and Non-Muslim Quraysh is of the marriage between the Prophet's (s) eldest daughter, Zaynab (r) and Abul Al-as. For Abul Al-as was Khadijah's (r) dear nephew. According to Ibn Hisham, during the ignorance period, this tie had been fixed by Khadijah (r) and was to the Prophet's (s) liking.

An interesting and significant report by ibn Sa'ad is that initially 'Aishah (r) was to be married to Jubayr, son of a Makkan chief Mut'im. It was Mut'im who had extended protection to Prophet Muhammad (s) after Abu Talib's death. Later Mut'im and family, however, refused to accept a Muslim girl as their daughter-in-law lest she might preach Islam in their family. This incident again points to the matrimonial ties between the two communities.

Coalition Government of Quraysh Majority and Muslim minority

At the time of the Prophet Muhammad's (s) advent, the Quraysh tribe held twelve important political and social positions and these were the hereditary offices of the twelve most important families of Quraysh. Some of them had embraced Islam. For example, Abu Bakr (r) was the earliest Muslim. Later 'Umar (r) accepted Islam, Abbas (r) is taken as an early Muslim, while 'Uthman (r) and Khalid (r) also entered the fold of Islam. Almost half of these Quraysh chiefs had abandoned their ancestral faith and accepted Islam. Yet, they did not give up their office. In other words, fanatic Makkan Quraysh chiefs did not depose them. Even as Muslims they carried on looking after the affairs of their tribes and cooperated with the Makkan chiefs until

their emigration to Medina. Therefore, the Makkan polity was ruled by a coalition of Muslim and non-Muslim office bearers. It was a mixed government of both Quraysh majority and Muslim minority communities.

Muhammad (s) always pursued the path of friendly, cordial relations, co-operation and interaction in political, socio-cultural and economic matters with his non-Muslim brothers. The Quraysh, too, pursued the same in their own interests.

Social Relationships

The Prophet's Meal Parties

After receiving the divine command for preaching Islam publicly the Prophet Muhammad (s) arranged meal parties for the non-Muslim majority Quraysh for improving social relations and for spreading the message of Islam. This was reflective of Arab social traditions and the Prophet's (s) and Companions' regular practice. With the preaching of Islam, this became a strong social tradition. Abu Bakr (r) had invited 'Uthman (r), Zubayr (r), Talhah (r), 'Abd al-Rahman, and Sa'ad before their acceptance of Islam.

Buying and Freeing Slaves

Prophet Muhammad (s) liberated helpless non-Muslim slaves from their unjust masters and set them free. He granted equal status for freed slaves. The Prophet's (s) gentleness soothed their pain. It is generally held that some affluent Muslim Companions had freed their slaves. It was no doubt a noble gesture on their part. However, on close study it emerges that it was the Prophet Muhammad's (s) strategy that they should be bought for securing their release from the clutches of their oppressive masters and for freeing them from exploitation. It was Prophet Muhammad (s) who had exhorted rich Muslims to do so.

Prophet Muhammad (s) resorted to employing the principle of buying slaves to free them. All the rich members of the Muslim community acted on his directive. The Prophet's (s) first wife Khadijah (r), mother of Muslim believers, donated all she had in this cause, as the Prophet (s) acknowledged. Abu Bakr (r) secured the release of a large number of slaves. It helped protect the weak against oppression. In the Makkan period, Abu Bakr (r) had more than forty thousand dirham's in cash, besides his property and goods. He spent all this in the cause of releasing slaves. At the time of emigration to Medina he was left with only five thousand dirham's, and this, too, was meant for the Muslim community. Umar (r), 'Abd al-Rahman (r) son of Awf and many other affluent Makkan Muslims generously spent their wealth on buying and freeing slaves. Abdullah al-Nahham (r) sponsored several poor Makkan non-Muslim slaves. Even the fanatic Makkan Quraysh leaders were so much impressed by his charity that they did not let him emigrate to Medina, fearing that the orphans and poor persons supported by him would have no one to help them. He actively pursued the Islamic directive to engage in charity and help the poor.

Greatest Respect

Prophet Muhammad (s) always retained very strong ties with the members of different clans and with his kin who had not accepted Islam, including his uncle, Abu Talib, thanks to whom the Prophet (s) had enjoyed immunity among the Quraysh. Muhammad (s) visited him just as he was about to breathe his last. Abu Talib confirmed that he had been happy to protect his nephew, who had always been moderate and just. Abu Talib died with the Prophet (s) by his side. This man, who, with dignity and courage, had granted Prophet Muhammad (s) his protection, as well as his love and respect, had not embraced Islam. Muhammad (s) loved and respected him, and his sorrow was all the more intense.

Deepest Confidence

Another uncle, Abbas (r), remained by the Prophet's (s) side even though he had not yet converted to Islam. Muhammad's (s) trust in him was tremendous, and he did not hesitate to confide in him or have him take part in private meetings involving the future of the Muslim community. Later, Abbas (r) was present when the second agreement of al-Aqabah was concluded. The Prophet (s) would also keep him informed of the highly confidential preparations for his emigration to Medina. Abbas remaining a polytheist never prevented the Prophet (s) from showing him the greatest respect and deepest confidence in situations where his very life was at risk.

Honesty

Prophet Muhammad (s) himself was a model of equity toward those who did not share his faith. Through all the years of Muhammad (s) mission at Makkah, he continued to receive important deposits from non-Muslim traders who went on dealing with him and wholly trusted him. On the eve of his departure for Medina (*Hijra*), the Prophet Muhammad (s) asked Ali (r) to give back to their respective owners the deposits he still held. He carefully applied the principles of honesty and justice that Islam had taught that Muslims should observe with regard to all, no matter who they are in the terms of religion, is they Muslims or non-Muslims.

Reliability

Prophet (s) and his Companion Abu Bakr (r) decided to migrate to Medina, and had entrusted themselves to God. Yet, they did not hesitate to enlist the help of a non-Muslim guide who shared their enemies' polytheist beliefs, but at the same time was well known for his trustworthiness and abilities. As a guide he knew

better than anyone else the steep out-of-the-way, inconspicuous and unfamiliar route they took to escape from the Quraysh. At that time, the Quraysh had declared a reward of 100 red camels to anyone who would bring Muhammad (s) to them. The non-Muslim guide was fully aware of the reward that he would get from the polytheist Quraysh had he betrayed the Prophet (s), but he was true to his word and helped the Prophet (s) reach Medina safely.

Nobleness

Every day before the Prophet (s) left his house to go to the Kaabah, an elderly woman would throw trash on his path, out of disrespect and because she didn't like the message the Prophet (s) was preaching. One day, when the Prophet (s) did not notice any garbage in his path, he visited her. When elderly lady saw the Prophet (s) at her house, she was shocked. When she asked why he had come, the Prophet (s) responded by saying that he did not find any garbage in his path so he thought she might be sick and that is why he came to visit her. She felt guilty and embarrassed because of her behavior. This attitude of the Prophet (s) softened the heart of this non-Muslim lady and she was convinced that the Prophet (s) was truly a Prophet of God, and she accepted Islam.

Tenderness

After the great conquest of Makkah, the Prophet Muhammad (s) was patrolling Makkah and taking care of the people of Makkah; he saw an old woman struggling to carry her luggage and was leaving Makkah. The Prophet (s) took her luggage on his shoulders and helped her to cross the border of Makkah. While walking along with the old woman, Prophet (s) enquired why she was leaving Makkah at night. She replied that Makkah has been conquered by Muhammad: I am a non-Muslim; I

thought that the army of Muhammad may capture me and harm me. They are victorious. They may ruin Makkah. I don't want to see that scenario." She cursed the Prophet (s) for having brought her to this position and at the same time thanked and praised the man who helped to carry her luggage. She asked the Prophet (s), by the way who are you, and expressed her fear that the Muslims might capture him. Prophet (s) replied "*I am Muhammad*" the woman was astonished, she could not believe this and enquired if he was the same Prophet who had conquered Makkah and yet was so kind, patrolling and taking care of the people of Makkah." The Prophet's (s) response and behavior toward her had such an effect that she immediately apologized to him and accepted Islam.

Relationship with NON - MUSLIMS OF MEDINA

‘Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence’

Soon after migrating to Medina and making sure that the pillars of the new Islamic community were well established on a strong base of administrative, political and ideological unity, the Prophet (s) started to establish regular and clearly-defined relations with non-Muslims. All these efforts were exerted solely to provide peace, security, and prosperity to mankind at large, and to bring about a spirit of understanding and harmony.

Geographically, the closest people to Muslims in and around Medina were the Jews. He decided to conclude a treaty with them with clauses that provided full freedom in faith and wealth, the Prophet (s) did not compel anybody to convert to Islam. He made it clear that he wanted relations within the new society to be egalitarian. He showed the utmost respect toward individuals and their beliefs. For many years, a young Jew was his companion and followed him everywhere, for he loved the Prophet's (s) company. The Prophet (s) never asked him to abandon his faith. Eventually the boy fell seriously ill, and on his deathbed he asked his father to allow him to embrace Islam, with his father's permission, the boy became a Muslim, but during all his time by the Prophet's (s) side he had remained what he was and enjoyed the Prophet's (s) love and regard.

● For the most part, relations between Muslims and Christians during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (s) were fairly cordial. The Prophet's (s) wife Aishah (r) is reported to have told her nephew, Urwah, There were a few Christian

neighbors of the Prophet (s) who had some milk cattle. They occasionally sent him milk as a gift and we shared that".

Mutual Trust

Prophet Muhammad (s), showed greatest confidence and trust in non-Muslims he made it possible for Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia, which was under the protection of a king who was not a Muslim. This attitude is to be found throughout the Prophet's (s) life: he established his relationships in the name of trust and the respect of principles, and not exclusively on the basis of religious affiliation. His Companions had understood this as well, and they did not hesitate to develop solid ties with non-Muslims in the name of kinship or friendship and on the basis of mutual respect and trust, even in perilous situations. Examples of this nature abound. The Quran was to establish the rightfulness of such relationships formed on the basis of mutual respect and trust, even in perilous situations. Thus, Ume Salamah (r), who had been separated from her husband, found herself alone with her son on her way to Medina. Uthman, son of Talhah, who was not a Muslim, offered to escort and protect her until she reached the place where her husband was. She did not hesitate to trust him: he accompanied her and her son to their destination, and then took leave of them in the most respectful manner. Ume Salamah (r) was often to tell this story, always praising Uthman's noble character.

Examples of this nature abound, and neither the Prophet (s) nor the other Muslims ever restricted their social and human relations to their co-religionists alone. Later, the Quran was to establish the rightfulness and the principle of such relationships formed on the basis of mutual trust:

God does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for [your] faith, nor drive you out

of your homes, from dealing kindly [showing affection] and justly with them: for God loves those who are just. God only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for [your] faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them [for friendship and protection]. It is those who turn to them [in these circumstances] who do wrong. (Quran, 60 : 8-9)

This teaching was to remain the same in spite of difficulties, treason, and wars. No one was compelled to convert, differences were tolerated, and all people were treated justly. This is the Quranic revelation's key message and the heart of the Prophet's (s) action: all the verses of the Quran that refer to conflicts, killing, and fighting must be read in the context of their revelation (Muslims being in a situation of war and needing to defend themselves) and by no means alter the essential contents of the message as a whole.

Compassion

No discrimination was exercised against non-Muslims on the basis of religion. The attitude of the Prophet (s) toward his Jewish neighbors was kind and cordial. He always visited their homes to enquire after the health of their sick person's. There was a Jewish tribe by the name of Banu 'Arid in Medina. The Prophet (s) had been pleased with them and had fixed an annual remuneration for them.

Inclusiveness

The inclusiveness and richness of the Prophet Muhammad's (s) teachings is reflected in his view of knowledge and in his

adoption of foreign culture items. He is reported to have said: *"Wisdom is (like) the lost animal of a Muslim; wherever he finds it, catches hold of it"*. The Prophet (s) sometimes wore Roman and Persian attire and advised the use of Indian medicines. Emperor Negus of Abyssinia sent him leather socks, which he wore. Once Sa'ad (r) son of Abi Waqqas, a companion of Prophet (s), complained of chest pain. When the Prophet (s) was informed about this, he suggested that the patient be taken to Harith son of Kaldah, who was a Christian physician at Medina.

Trust and Loyalty

The attitude of Muslims toward their non-Muslim compatriots was one of kindness, consideration and extreme tolerance. Non-Muslims reciprocated the generous, treatment with their trust and loyalty. In 2 A.H (*After Hijra*), after the Muslims victory in the battle of Badr, Makkan leaders sent yet another delegation to the King Negus with a view to seek the repatriation of Muslims from Abyssinia so that they could be persecuted at home. To counter the move, the Prophet (s) sent a Non-Muslim, 'Amr, son of Umayya, as his ambassador to the court of the Negus. The ambassador succeeded in thwarting the evil intentions of the Quraysh leaders against the Muslims.

Non - Muslims' Supported Prophet to fight against Enemies

Prophet Muhammad (s) was very realistic, so he did not ignore preparations for war or slacken in his efforts. He achieved a wonderful balance between spiritual and material power. He employed the former most ingeniously in building a very high morale in his men, unparalleled in human history, and, at the

same time, took all possible steps for preparing his forces with the military equipment of his times. He did not leave anything to chance but made full preparations, using all the available resources. In the battle of Hunayn, even though he had a strong force of twelve thousand, he borrowed a hundred suits of arms and armour from a non-Muslim named Safwan bin Umayya to further strengthen his defensive and striking power. Thus Safwan, a non-Muslim helped the Prophet (s) to fight the enemies of Islam in the Battle of Hunayn.

- Two Non-Muslims, Safwan and Suhayl, fought bravely against enemies of Islam, along with Muslims in the battle of Hunayn. The Prophet (s) recognized and honored them. When Prophet (s) began sharing out the goods, he gave the important and large part of the captured treasure to them, and he did not require them to convert to Islam.

- While getting ready for the battle of Uhud, the Muslim army had to find an inconspicuous route to Uhud that would enable the Muslim army to approach the battleground without being anticipated or discovered by their Quraysh enemies. For this purpose, the Prophet Muhammad (s) trusted a non-Muslim guide whose abilities were widely known. He led the Muslim army to their destination.



Nobleness and Tolerance

That gentleness and kindness were the very essence of Prophet Muhammad's (s) teaching. He kept saying: *"God is gentle and he loves gentleness in everything."* Prophet (s) declared to one of his Companions:

"There are in you two qualities that God loves: mercy and patience "nobleness," "tolerance."

Prophet Muhammad (s) himself exemplified religious tolerance in different circumstances. Once a Bedouin urinated in the mosque, and the Muslim companions rushed to beat him. The Prophet (s) ordered them to leave him alone. The Prophet (s) poured water over the place where the Bedouin has urinated. He then explained to the Bedouin calmly,

"This is a place of worship; in it is the worship of God and the reading of Quran".

After the bedouin had left, Prophet (s) then said to his Companions,

"You have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them."



No Compulsion in Religion

The Quran explicitly states that *"let there be no compulsion in religion"* (Quran, 2 : 256). The Prophet (s) was advised to invite people to the path of righteousness and guidance not through intimidation and coercion but in a gentle and amiable manner.

Thus the Quran Says,

"Invite (all) to the way of the lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in the best of ways" (Quran, 16:125)

A delegation of fourteen Christian religious leaders from Najran (Yemen) visited the Prophet (s) in order to question him about the new religion, about his faith and of course, about the status of 'Prophet Jesus (a.s) in Islam.' The Prophet (s) answered their questions, pointing out the link between the two traditions' Islam and Christianity, Islam being the continuation of Prophet Jesus' (a.s) message, but he categorically rejected the system of belief of Trinity.

Muhammad (s) invited them to worship One God, Allah, and accept Islam as the religion, and Quran as the last revelation. This confirms the recognition of the previous Books that came down to mankind, through Prophet Moses (a.s) and 'Prophet

Jesus (a.s)' the Quran is part of the same monotheistic tradition. (The belief that there is only One God.)

The delegation of Christians listened to the contents of the new religion, and put forward their arguments. However, they refused to accept Prophet Muhammad's (s) message. Before they left, they wanted to perform their prayers inside the mosque. The Muslim Companions present there thought it fit to oppose them, but the Prophet (s) intervened, and said "*Let them pray*". The Christians prayed inside the mosque itself facing east.

Before the Christian delegation left, they invited the Prophet (s) to send with them an envoy who would live with them, answer their questions and, if needed, judge some of their affairs. The Prophet (s) delegated Abu Ubaydah (r) for this purpose.

The Christian delegation went home. The Christians had come to Medina, inquired about the message, listened to the contents of the new religion, put forward their arguments, prayed inside the mosque and went back without suffering any harm, remaining Christians and perfectly free. The first Companions were not to forget the Prophet's (s) attitude. They were to draw from it the substance of the respect that Islam demand of its faithful, whom it invites to go beyond tolerance, to learn, listen, and to recognize others' dignity.

The command of Quran "*No compulsion in religion*" is in keeping with this respectful approach to diversity.



Tolerance for other Religions

In the Quran, Almighty God says:

Do not insult those who invoke others besides Allah, because they will insult (the Name of) Allah, in their ignorance..... (Quran, 6 : 108)

The message of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was emphatically clear about use of civilized language about others, religions. He always advised that deities of other faiths and their scriptures must not be insulted. He also said do not call deities of other religions with bad names in return they may also call Almighty Allah with bad names.

Further evidence of Prophet Muhammad's (s) attitude and respect towards other religions is given by an incident that occurred as he and his followers were leaving Khaybar for Medina.

A Jew rabbi noticed that some Muslims had taken with them, as spoils of war, copies of the Jews Holy Book, 'Torah'. The rabbi protested to Prophet Muhammad (s): The Prophet (s) got very upset and ordered the Muslims to return every copy of the sacred book and Prophet (s) personally apologized for his companion's misbehavior.

Commenting on this, Dr Israel Welpenson, a Jewish scholar of repute, writes that the event shows the high regard the Prophet Muhammad (s) had for their scriptures. His tolerant and considerate behavior impressed the Jews who could never forget that the Prophet (s) did nothing which insulted their sacred scriptures. The Jews knew how the Romans had, when they captured Jerusalem in 70 B.C., burnt their scriptures and trampled them under their feet. The fanatic Christians persecuting the Jews of Spain had likewise consigned their scriptures to fire. This is the great difference we find between these conquerors and the Prophet of Islam.

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Khaybar

The city of Khaybar, 150 km north of Medina, was a regional power of Jews feared by all, and attacking it seemed unthinkable because its fortresses, weaponry, and riches were far superior to what their enemies, including Medina, could ever hope to fight and overpower. The Khaybar leaders advised by members, of Jewish tribes the Banu Quynuqa, Banu Nadir, and Banu Qurayzah, were hostile to Prophet Muhammad's (s) presence in the region and never failed to show it and to harm the interests of his Muslim community or of isolated individuals whenever they had a chance.

Leaders of Khaybar sent special envoys to the Makkan Quraysh and other anti-Islam tribes, such as Ghatafan and Hawazin, and even supported them financially to prepare themselves for an attack on Medina, their intrigues brought hosts of enemies against Muslims of Medina in the Battle of Trench, and they even devised an attempt on the Prophet's (s) life. Therefore, within a fortnight of the Muslims' return from Hdaybiyah, Prophet (s) thought of dealing with Khaybar first. After the Treaty of Hdaybiyah, Prophet Muhammad (s) was at peace with Makkah and could now settle the affair of Khaybar without any fear of attack on Medina from the Makkan Quraysh.

Prophet Muhammad (s) sent envoys repeatedly to Khaybar, for peaceful settlement, but all in vain. Consequently, Prophet Muhammad (s) decided to organize an expedition against Khaybar, but he determined to keep it a secret until the very last moment, so as not to alert the enemy. While Khaybar and its allies could rely on nearly fourteen thousand men, Muhammad (s) decided to go there with an army of only fourteen hundred, though he could have mobilized more. Near the city at night, he called upon a guide who knew the area well, and made his camp between two of the Khaybar fortresses: in that way, he could cut off all communication between the Khaybar people and their Ghatafan allies. When day broke, the inhabitants of the two forts were surprised and fear immediately invaded their ranks. The siege lasted several days. During which Muhammad (s) and his men gathered information enabling them to use the best strategy to compel their enemy to give in. They decided to attack the citadels one by one, beginning with the most exposed and vulnerable. The method worked very well, and it was not long before the first fortresses fell. The surrender conditions were discussed for each individual case, but most of the time, the vanquished were required to leave their possessions and exile themselves with their women and children.

The last major fortress, Qamus, resisted for fourteen days, but eventually gave in, for the Muslims' siege was choking it and left no hope of victory. Then the last two forts also surrendered and they, in their turn, negotiated the terms of their capitulation. The Prophet (s) agreed to allow the inhabitant to stay and manage their farm land and orchards, provided they paid the Muslims a regular tax on their products.

Poison and Agreement

The Jews agreed and invited Muhammad (s) and his companions for a feast to celebrate the occasion. When a shoulder of lamb was brought and served to Prophet Muhammad (s), he took a mouthful but, noticing the strange taste of the meat, immediately spat it out. He tried to warn one of his Companions Bisher (r), who had already started to eat, but it was too late. The Companion, died. The women who had cooked the lamb were summoned, and she admitted that the meat had been poisoned, providing an excuse that if the eaters were a king, she would then rid herself of him, but should he be a Prophet, then he would be bound to learn about it. The Prophet Muhammad (s) however, ignored her treacherous attempt, but later ordered that she be killed when his companion Bisher (r) died of that poison. The Muslims were furious; they wanted to repudiate the agreement and resume fighting. But the Prophet (s) forgave the Jews and honored the terms of the agreement.

Safiyyah chooses God and His Messenger

Among the war captives was Huyay's daughter Safiyyah (r) (Huyay was chief of the Jewish tribes Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayzah). Safiyyah (r) in no way resembled her father, and she had long been trying to learn the contents of Prophet Muhammad's (s) message. She was pious and did not share her people's hostility towards the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) had heard of that woman and of the spirituality, and she did not hesitate to tell him about one of her dreams, associating her fate with that of the city of Medina Muslims. Prophet Muhammad (s) listened to her, and then gave her a choice:

remain a Jew and return to her people, or become a Muslim. She exclaimed: "I choose God and His Messenger!"

The Prophet (s) granted her, her freedom and then short time later he married her, following the example of the great conquerors who married the daughters and wives of the kings whom they had conquered, partly in order to alleviate their tragedy and partly to preserve their dignity.

A new stage was reached in that seventh year of *hijrah* (628 C.E.) with all the fortresses conquered; Prophet Muhammad (s) had neutralized his last major enemy in the area. Peace now reigned over the Arab peninsula, and the Muslims no longer had to fear attacks from the north. Agreements regulating tribe or clan relationships, or trade in general, enabled the Muslim community to settle down with maximum security.

The Prophet's (s) marriages also had to do with that situation: some of his wives came from clans that had, in effect, become family to Prophet Muhammad (s) and so considered themselves his natural allies. Hence, the Muslim community itself seemed to have become invulnerable and unassailable: in the space of eight years, it had not only settled in a new city, Medina, but had secured unparalleled status and regional prestige.



The Magnanimous Gesture

Famine appeared at this time in Makkah and hit its people most adversely. Since the city had no agriculture, it had to import food from outside, but the places which provided grain to Makkah were also affected by famine.

Najd was the only area of the Arab Peninsula which had escaped famine and was in a position to export grain to Makkah.

One day a 30 member Muslim military patrol under the command of Ibn Muslima arrested a person whose movements were considered suspicious and he was brought to Medina. The Prophet (s) personally knew him. He was chief of the Najd territory, a man named Thumamah, had once visited Makkah before the migration. The Prophet (s) as usual had preached Islam to him, but he had threatened to kill him instead. The same person now appeared as a prisoner before him. The Prophet (s) asked, *"whether time was not ripe to renounce idolatry and submit to God."* He replied: "O Muhammad! If you kill me, you kill a murderer and if you show mercy and benevolence, your mercy will be on a grateful person. If you want material ransom ask, and I will give it to you." Hearing this, the Prophet (s) kept quiet.

This was an ambiguous Arabic expression which could mean that his hands were tainted with blood and that he deserved being eliminated on that score. He had possibly killed some Muslims. The conversation ended at that, but the Prophet (s) ordered that he should be treated as a 'prisoner guest,' so that he could witness the daily life of a common Muslim in the mosque. On the second day, the same thing was repeated and when, on the third day, he gave the same reply, the Prophet (s) ordered to release him and said; "*Thumamah you are free now, go wherever you want*".

This merciful treatment by the Prophet (s) was against his expectations. He was deeply affected by the Prophet's (s) magnanimous gesture. He got out of the mosque, went to a well near-by, had a bath and returned to the mosque. Presenting himself to the Prophet (s), he proclaimed: "I bear witness that there is no god but God and bear witness that Muhammad (s) is His Messenger". To this he added a sentence: "A few moments ago you were for me the most hated man in the world, but now you are the man I love most in this world." No religion was worse in my eyes than your religion, now the same is dearest to me of all. No city was more unpleasant to me than Medina, and now the same is the most pleasant of all."

Thamama's acceptance of Islam opened the way for spread of Message of Islam in the politically important area of Najd.

In the conversation that followed, he offered to cut off the supply of food from Najd to Makkah and pledged that not a grain would be exported without the express approval of Prophet Muhammad (s). This worsened the serious food situation of the city of Makkah, which was already reeling under famine. The Makkans were obliged at last to send a delegation to Medina and request the Prophet (s) to have mercy on his compatriots who were starving to death. Prophet Muhammad

(s) at once sent a ward to Thumamah, asking him to lift the blockade, and said:

"It is Allah who gives provisions to all, including His enemies. Do what you were doing before (supplying grain), but give a little more."

Not only that. Prophet Muhammad (s) sent to the Makkan leader Abu Sufyan five hundred gold sovereigns, a substantial sum in those days, for distribution to the poor and the needy in Makkah.

The staunch enemy of Islam, Abu Sufyan, fretted and fumed, history has recorded his response: "Muhammad wants to mislead our young men." In any case he was in no position to return the sum.

The Quraysh had inflicted so much injury and damage to the person, family and followers of the Prophet (s) during his stay in Makkah that no words can describe its severity and harshness. They had imposed social boycott the Prophet (s) and his family for three years. The Prophet (s) in return for this inhuman treatment allowed food grains from Yamamah to pass to the Makkans during the days of famine and saved them from starvation.

Later, other events of a similar nature took place, their collective effect was that the people of Makkah, instead of looking upon the Prophet (s) as their enemy, began to feel proud of him for they saw in him a brother citizen who was becoming more powerful day by day. They did not have the courage to express the sentiment, but they began naturally to feel inclined towards him and his religion Islam.



Recreation and Leisure

Recreation and leisure are essential requirements of life in order to recharge and revitalize an individual and dispel monotony. This is where people look for some fun and entertainment.

The Prophet (s) allowed his followers to have harmless, innocent and clean diversions in life within permissible limits. He would like to go to the gardens sometimes alone and sometimes with his companions and would engage with them in chatting on various topics, under the shade of trees. Sometimes swimming competitions would be arranged among his companions. On one such occasion, Abu Bakr (r) was with him. When it rained after a long break, the Prophet (s) bathed in the shower wearing an overall.

He even participated in races and archery and took part in wrestling bouts and heartily laughed with others.

On joyous occasions, he liked playing drums that were open from one side. Once on the day of Eid, two girls were sitting by the side of his wife Ayesha (r) and were singing. This angered Abu Bakr (r) and he snubbed them. The Prophet (s) intervened and allowed them to continue singing.

He even allowed beating of drums on the eve of marriages. When an Ansar girl, who lived with Ayesha (r), was

getting married, a group of girls were singing, seated around her. The Prophet (s) allowed them to sing and play music. He said the Ansars were fond of music, therefore a singing girl should be sent with the bride.

On yet another such occasion, some girls were singing when Amir (r) came and snubbed them, upon which, some of the holy companions who were around said, "If you want to enjoy the song, take a seat, or go away. We have the Prophet's (s) permission for the same."

Once on Eid day, a delegation from Abyssinia performed various games and traditional dances in the courtyard of the Prophet's house and Aishah (r) wanted to watch this performance. The Prophet (s) stood on the doorstep of his dwelling, allowing his wife to watch the performance discreetly from behind his shoulders.

On another occasion, they had a race. It is reported by Aishah (r) that then; she was with the Prophet (s) on a journey. She raced with him on foot and beat him, but when she put on some weight she raced again with him and he beat her.

19

UMRAH

Lesser Pilgrimage

One year had elapsed since the treaty of Al-Hudaybiyah, and it was now time to prepare for the visit to Makkah mentioned in the agreement. Two thousand Muslims accordingly set off with Prophet Muhammad (s) with the intention of performing *Umrah*, the lesser pilgrimage. Among them was a poor man who had arrived from Makkah and had settled with the *Ahl As-Suffah* (the people of the bench). He was poor and humble, and the Prophet (s) called him "*the father of the kitten*", so much did he love kittens. This was Abu Hurayrah, who had converted to Islam rather late and who was to become one of the most reliable and respected narrators of Prophetic traditions (*Ahadith*).

The pilgrims went to Makkah and stopped on the edge of the sacred territory to wait for the Quraysh to move out of the area, allowing the Muslims to perform their rites freely. The Muslims were wearing the humbled garments sanctified for pilgrimage, and they entered Makkah while the Quraysh people watched them from the surrounding hills. The Prophet (s) performed the seven circumambulations around the Kaabah, then the same number of times waling up and down between

the hills of *As-Safa* and *Al-Marwa*. After that, he sacrificed a camel and had his head shaved: he had thus completed the rites of the lesser pilgrimage, followed by all the other pilgrims. He wanted to get into the Kaabah itself, but the Quraysh refused arguing that this was not part of their agreement. The Prophet (s) did not challenge them, and throughout his stay he remained in the enclosure of the House of God (*Bayt Allah*), from which Bilal (r) called the pilgrims to prayer five times a day in his beautiful, powerful voice. From the hills where they looked on, many Quraysh people were impressed, as they were later to confess, by the simplicity, dignity of the Muslims' religious practice and behavior.

Around this time, the Prophet's (s) uncle, Abbas (r) publicly declared his conversion to Islam.

Inner Illumination

When the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was back in Medina and daily life had resumed its course, he heard of the unexpected arrival of three men who had met on the way and who were arriving together to meet him. Usman (r) son of Talhah, Khalid son of Walid, and Amr, son of Al-As were all coming to convert to Islam and pledge loyalty to the Prophet (s), whom they had fought so violently and aggressively for so many years. The Prophet (s) was very happy about their conversion to Islam, and so were all the Companions, who were aware of the three men's qualities: their commitment was sincere and unreserved. Those conversions to Islam, like Abu Hurayrah's some time before, were loaded with teaching, for not only was the past of Islam's worst's enemies forgotten as soon as they recognized God's oneness, but the during of time these people had needed in order to follow the path of God, said nothing about their

sincerity, their moral qualities, and their future status within the community of faith.

After being hostile to Prophet Muhammad (s) and his message of Islam for almost twenty years, they had undergone a profound conversion. Thus Islamic faith, its intensity and its power to convert and transform hearts — cannot be measured on the basis of time or rationality; its very sincerity and intensity attest to its nature, and this is why a recent convert can attain a deeper, more complete inner illumination than someone else can reach after years of religious practice. The opposite is also true, and again, this requires people to refrain from judging others' hearts.

Confronting Syria

A few months later, the Prophet (s) decided to send envoys to the north, to ensure the solidity of existing alliances and the ability of Muslims to travel to Syria for their trade. Fifteen men were sent out, but fourteen of them were killed; at the same time another envoy, who had been sent to Busra, was also stopped and killed by a leader of the Ghassan tribe. The threat from Syria was clearly intensifying, and those murders of peaceful envoys had to be redressed. Killing envoys and messengers used to be regarded as the most awful crime, and amounted to declaration of war. The Prophet (s) was shocked on hearing the news and decided to send an army of three thousand men, and he placed the former slave Zayd (r), son of Harithah in command — which greatly surprised many Companions. He added that if Zayd (r) was killed, Jafar (r), who had recently returned from Abyssinia, would take over the command, and if Jafar (r) died too, he would be replaced by Abdullah (r), son of Rawahah.

The battle of Syria was the most significant and the fiercest battle during the life time of Prophet Muhammad (s), a beginning and a start to the great conquest of the land of the Christians. It took place in 8 A.H. / 629 C.E. at Muthah a village on the border of Greater Syria near Philistine.

The Muslim army marched out, and when they arrived near Syria, they heard that a majority of anti-Islam Arab tribes had banded together and that they had managed to obtain the support of the Byzantine (Roman) imperial troops, which made them more than a hundred thousand strong. Having only three thousand men, the Muslims had no chance. Once they reached Muthah (Syria), where the topography was more favorable, Zayd (r) ordered his troops to launch a sudden attack, seeking to create a surprise. The strategy momentarily staggered the enemy, but it was not sufficient to tip the scales in favor of the Muslims, who were so heavily outnumbered. Zayd (r) was killed, then Jafar, his successor, then Abdullah (r). The Muslim troops were in disarray until eventually Khalid took command, gathered the Muslim army, and enabled them to protect themselves from a new attack. Muslims had lost only eight men, but they had to retreat, and this was plainly a defeat; however, Khalid had managed to avoid a confrontation that could have ended up in a slaughter.

Weeping for His Beloved

At that point, the Companions who had stayed in Medina with the Prophet underwent a most peculiar experience. They knew the Prophet (s) had dreams and visions that very often came true; they knew the Prophet (s) was inspired, and they had followed him as Revelations came to him in fragments. They were therefore accustomed to the strange, fantastic dimensions of his life among them.

One day, Prophet Muhammad (s) came to them and, though no envoy had come from the battlefield and they had not received any information about the expedition, the Prophet (s) started to recount the battle as if he had been present among the fighters. With tears in his eyes and painful emotion, he told them about the deaths of Zayd (r), Jafar (r), and Abdullah (r). He praised Khalid's (r) feat and called him "*Sayf-ul-Islam*" (the sword of Islam), but he could not conceal his deep sorrow when mentioning the dead who were so dear to him.

He went to Asma (r), Jafar's (r) wife, and her children to tell them the news and comfort them; he began to weep before he could speak, and Asma burst into tears when she heard of her husband's death.

The Prophet (s) then went to Ume Ayman (r) and Usamah and told them about Zayd's (r) death, his eyes full of tears: he had loved him like a son, and his family was particularly dear to him. Just after he left their dwelling, Zayd's (r) youngest daughter came out of her home and rushed into the Prophet's (s) arms; he tried to comfort her while tears were streaming down his face and he was sobbing.

One of the Companions who was passing by, Sa'ad (r), son of Ubadah, was surprised at this scene and particularly at the Prophet's tears, and asked him for an explanation. The Prophet answered that this was "*someone who loves weeping for his beloved.*" The Prophet (s) had taught his Companions to express love and tenderness, and at that moment, when faced with the final parting of death, he taught them about human fragility and the dignity of tears expressing love and the suffering of those who love.

The Muslim army returned from Syria under Khalid's (r) leadership and confirmed the Prophet's (s) vision. Things had happened precisely as he had told them, and the three Companions had been killed fighting. For the whole community,

those visions and that knowledge were additional signs of Muhammad's Prophethood. He was extraordinary, he acted remarkably, his intelligence and qualities did not resemble anyone else's, and yet he remained humble and fragile, and like them, he wept.

The situation remained difficult in the north, and the Arab tribes certainly thought they could use the Muslims' defeat in Muta (Syria) to their own advantage. Muhammad (s) received intelligence report that some tribes were preparing a full-scale expedition against Medina. He decided to send strong army under the command of Amr (r). And the Muslim force was able to proceed into the Syrian territory, consolidate existing alliances, and establish new ones, which made it possible to secure that, which was till now an unsafe front.

The Treaty is Broken

As previously noted, the treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah applied not just to the Medina community and the Quraysh, but to all their allies as well. The Khuzaah were Muhammad's (s) allies, and one of their clans, the Banu Ka'af, was treacherously attacked one night by the Banu Bakr, the Quraysh's allies, who killed one of their men. The Banu Ka'ab promptly sent the Prophet (s) an envoy to inform him of that treason. It constituted a breach of the covenant, and Muhammad (s) decided the crime must not go unpunished: he had to help his Khuzaah allies.

As for the Quraysh, they understood how serious the situation was, and they decided to send their most influential man to convince Prophet Muhammad (s) not to respond to that isolated action. Yet, ever since the treaty had been signed, the Quraysh had kept breaking up on the terms and limits of the treaty, and they never hesitated to prompt other clans to set upon the Muslim community to weaken or even attack them.

This time, however, things had gone too far, and this was why the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan himself went to Medina to confer with the Prophet (s). Abu Sufyan tried to enlist the support first of his daughter, Ume Habibah (r), the Prophet's (s) wife, then of Ali (r), but he found no means to negotiate. The Prophet (s) remained silent, as did his Companions, and Abu Sufyan did not know what to think of the situation. Though Prophet Muhammad (s) refused to reach an agreement and Abu Sufyan returned to Makkah empty handed, these efforts ultimately ensured that the conquest of Makkah should happen.

The Conquest of Makkah

During the weeks that followed, the Prophet Muhammad (s) asked his Companions to get ready for an expedition, though he kept its objective secret. Only a few close Companions knew what was coming. Rumors suggested that the army would march towards Syria, or towards Taif, or against the Hawazin, so as to spread uncertainty over the whole Arab Peninsula.

The expedition set off during the month of Ramadan, and the Prophet at first let the Muslims decide whether or not they wanted to fast. He himself fasted until they reached Marr Az-Zahran; when they camped there, he required the Muslims to stop fasting, for they would need all their energy.

The Marr Az-Zahran camp lay at a crossroad: their destination might be Najd, to the east, or Taif, or Makkah. Abbas, who had left Makkah to settle in Medina, heard about the Muslims' movement and joined them. When they established their camp, the Prophet (s) asked every soldier to light a fire in order to impress the enemy: ten thousand fires were lit, suggesting a huge army was on the move, since each fire was supposed to provide for the needs of five to ten soldiers.

in Makkah who sought refuge at Abu Sufyan's house, or in the Kaabah sanctuary, or simply remained inside their home, would have nothing to fear and would be spared. Abu Sufyan hurried back to Makkah before the Muslim army got there and (jeered at by his own wife Hind, who called him a madman and a coward, and by other leaders such as Ikrimah, son of Abu Jahl, who insulted him) advised everybody to surrender and offer no resistance to the Prophet's (s) extraordinary army.

Prophet Muhammad (s) had turned Abu Sufyan into an ally, not only because Abu Sufyan (r) had converted to Islam, but also because the Prophet (s) had observed his character and personality. Abu Sufyan (r) had first recognized God, but found it difficult to confer special status on a man he had fought and considered his equal; Prophet Muhammad (s) had understood this and had not rushed him, giving him time to observe and understand by himself. Even after Abu Sufyan had embraced Islam, the Prophet (s) was aware that he retained an attraction for power and glory, and he took this into account when he exposed him to the strength of his army and conferred on him a specific role in the possible resolution of the conflict.

Though Prophet Muhammad (s) insisted on common principles, he was able to take particular traits into account: his mission was to reform the latter through the former, but he never neglected the character, aspirations, and specified features that made up each individual's personality. His message insisted on the principle of equality for all in justice, as well as the psychology of differences and of each person's marvel, spectacle in faith.

20

THE GLORIOUS VICTORY

Makkah was conquered by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), in January 630 A.D, 10th day of Ramadan, eight years after the *hijrah*. It is called *Fatah-e-Mubeen*, 'The Glorious Victory.' Prophet Muhammad (s) marched to Makkah with an army consisting of 3000 Muslims of Medina and Muslims from other Arab communities that joined him on the way from Medina totaling 10,000 Muslims. Prophet Muhammad (s) had segmented his army into divisions that encircled the city and closed in on the centre together.

When the army marched through Kada for entry into Makkah, Abbas (r), at the instance of the Prophet (s) took Abu Sufyan to a convenient spot to show him the strength of the Islamic force, and the clan after clan with its chief bearing its standard passed along and Abu Sufyan asked about each contingent. When Sa'ad (r) passed by Abu Sufyan, the long history of the oppressions of the Quraysh passed before his eyes and he shouted, "Today is the day of great expedition. Today the sanctity of Kaabah will be for us." When the Prophet (s) heard of this cry his face changed color in anger and became very sensitive, expressed severe disapproval and he immediately ordered that the standard be taken from Sa'ad. At the same

time Prophet (s) said,

"This is the day of the greatness of Kaabah and the virtue and generosity."

A few Quraysh groups posted themselves on the hills, led by Suhayl, Ikrimah, and Safwan, but after the first confrontations, they realized that resisting was pointless. Suhayl sought refuge in his home, and Ikrimah and Safwan ran away.

The Prophet (s) had demanded that no fighting or battle should take place on that day, which he called *"The day of Mercy"*.

Some eight years earlier, the Prophet (s) had left Makkah secretly, but with dignity and with his head held high. The Prophet (s) now came back to Makkah in broad daylight, victorious, but this time, he prostrated himself on his mount in thankfulness to the One God as he recited the verses from the Chapter *"Al-Fath"* (The Victory):

Verily we have granted you a manifest victory, that God may forgive you your faults of the past and those to follow, fulfill his favor to you, and guide you on the straight path, and that God may aid you with powerful help. It is He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers that they may add faith to their faith. (Quran, 48 : 1-4)

Prophet Muhammad (s) entered Makkah expressing the deepest humility, and he wanted the greatest kindness to be shown to the Muslims former foes. He performed the greater ablution and prayed eight cycles of voluntary ritual prayer before resting for a few hours. After that, he mounted his camel, Qaswa, and went to the Kaabah sanctuary, where he performed the seven rounds of circumambulation. Then, with his stick, he removed the idols, while repeating the Quranic verse, And

proclaim:

Truth has arrived, and falsehood perished: for falsehood is bound to perish. (Quran, 17:81)

The Prophet (s) had the keys to the sanctuary brought to him and requested that all religious images be wiped out, in order to reconcile the House of God with its essence, which was to celebrate the worship of the One God, Who cannot be represented and must not be associated with any image:

There is nothing whatever likes Him, and He is the One that hears and sees. (Quran, 42 : 11)

This gesture of removing the idols by the Prophet (s) was, in appearance, the exact opposite of all that he had usually been doing since leaving Makkah, as he had had mosques (devoid of any image) built to mark the sacred space of worship of the One God. On the level of the spiritual message, however, this gesture was exactly of the same essence, since by removing the idols that lay inside and near the Kaabah, he was removing what had, in the course of centuries, perverted the message of truth. With this act Muhammad (s) turned the Kaabah into a real mosque, in which henceforth only the One God, Almighty Allah was to be worshipped.

The Quraysh were gradually coming out of their homes and gathering inside the sanctuary enclosure. After removing the idols from the Kaabah, the Prophet (s) exclaimed:

"There is no god but God, the One, Who has no partner. He has fulfilled His promise, supported His servant, and rioted the enemy clans; He alone has done that".

Then he turned toward the Quraysh, told them about the rules of Islam, and recited this verse:

O human kind we created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored among you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you (the most deeply aware of God's presence). And God has full Knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Quran, 49 : 13)

After that, he asked them, "How they thought he was going to deal with them". They replied that as a "noble brother, son of a noble brother," he would certainly deal with them kindly. At that point, the Prophet (s) recited the verse that punctuates the story of Joseph (a.s) [Yusuf] when he was reunited with his brothers, who had wanted to kill him:

This day let no reproach be (cast) on you: God will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy. (Quran, 12 : 92)

Then he exclaimed: *Go on, you are free!*" the Prophet (s) granted his forgiveness to all the women and men who came to him.

The Day of Mercy

- Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) triumphantly entered Makkah without any ceremony or beating of drums or burning crackers but with his head bowed in prayer and gratitude to God. "Enter the gate with bowed heads" was the general order.

- The Prophet (s) ordered his Companion Bilal (r) to stand over the roof of the Kaabah and call the faithful to prayer. Attab son of Asid, a staunch enemy of Muhammad (s) on hearing the *Adhan* (call for prayer) whispered to his friend Al-Harith sitting next to him that his father, had he been alive, could have suffered seeing a 'black donkey' braying on top of the House of God.

● The Prophet (s) led the prayers, and then addressed the people of Makkah reminding them of the treatment they had meted out to him in the past twenty years and asked what they expected of him. Had the Prophet (s) wished he could have put all the people of Makkah to the sword, and they deserved it too. He had the military might and he had conquered the city. He could have ordered at least the confiscation of their property because they had looted the property of Muslims. He could have ordered that they should be taken as slaves. Such an order was possible and permissible and they also deserved it. But the last Prophet of God did nothing of the kind. He uttered only one sentence:

"Today there is no blame on you, there will be no retribution; go, all of you are free!"

● The generosity he had shown had surprised even extremely violent opponents. While many had insulted him, fought against him, and even killed member of his family and his dearest Companions, he offered them forgiveness, and protection.

● The same person who was cursing Bilal (r) a short while ago, on hearing the pronouncement of the Prophet (s) suddenly got up, and presented himself to the Prophet (s). Addressing him he said: "I am 'Attab, son of Asid your known enemy. I declare that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger!"

● The effect of the proclamation of amnesty was instantaneous. Not only Attab, but the entire population of Makkah embraced Islam overnight. When Attab, an enemy of the Prophet (s), declared his acceptance of Islam, the Prophet (s) named him governor of Makkah and fixed his salary, one Dirham per day.

● Wahshi, who had killed the Prophet's (s) uncle Hamzah

(r), was also forgiven, but the Prophet (s) asked him to refrain from appearing in his presence in the future. *"Don't come before me for you remind me of my uncle."*

● Safwan, a Makkan leader and deadly enemy of Islam, who sent 'Umir with a promise of reward if he killed the Prophet (s), ran away to Jeddah on that day and resolved to go to Yemen by sea. 'Umir came to the Prophet (s), and made the submission that: "O Allah's Messenger! Safwan is the chief of his community and out of fear from you has run away and might throw himself into the sea." Having learned that, the Prophet (s) said, *"He is given security."* He said, "O Allah's Messenger! Give me some sign of security so that seeing it, he might trust me." The Prophet gave him his turban, which he took to Safwan; Safwan said that he feared for his life in going back. 'Umir replied, "Safwan, so far you are unaware of the humility and forgiveness of Prophet Muhammad (s)." Hearing this, he went to the Prophet (s) and said, "Umir says that you have given me security." The Prophet (s) said, *"It is true."* Safwan asked that he might be given two months leave (to think). "The Prophet said, *"Not two, but you are given four month's leave (to think)."*

● Habar, another deadly enemy of Islam had inflicted great injury to Zaynab (r), daughter of the Muhammad (s). When she was emigrating from Makkah to Medina and was pregnant, Habar deliberately pulled her down from the camel. She was grievously hurt and her pregnancy was lost. He was impressed by the degree of forgiveness of the Prophet (s), then came to him and said, "O God's Messenger! I wanted to run away to Persia, but then I am overwhelmed by your favours and forgiveness. I admit my ignorance and crime, now I have come to accept Islam. All of a sudden, feelings of mercy overpowered everything.

● Nothing was hidden about the role of Abu Sufyan (r), since the Battle of Badr. All the killings and wars were initiated,

organized and fought by him against the Prophet (s), but when he was brought by Abbas (r), on the Day of Victory, the Prophet (s), treated him with love and kindness. 'Umar (r) intended to kill Abu Sufyan (r) for his previous crimes, but the Prophet (s) forbade him. The Prophet (s) not only forgave Abu Sufyan's (r) crimes, but also made his house a sanctuary of peace in these words, "*Whoever enters the house of Sufyan is safe and his crime forgiven.*"

● Hind, wife of Abu Sufyan: Her hatred of Islam was so great that in the battle of Uhud, she extracted Hamzah's (r) liver and masticated it. She came before the Prophet (s), sought forgiveness and accepted Islam. After the Prophet (s) had forgiven her and admitted her into the fold of Islam, she went home and broke all the idols in her house, saying "Truly, you have misled us."

● Ka'ab, son of Zuhayr, a famous poet, who used to write poems abusing the Prophet (s): He fled from Makkah when the city was conquered. But he then came to Medina, asked forgiveness, and pleaded with the Prophet (s) to accept his allegiance. The Prophet (s) did so, presenting Ka'ab with his own shawl at the same time.

● Abdullah, son of Zib'ari, yet another poet, who used to express his contempt for the Prophet (s) in verse: He fled to Najran. Later on he came to the Prophet (s), repented and accepted Islam. The Prophet (s) forgave and pardons him.

● 'Ikrimah son of Abu Jahl who, following his father's footsteps was an uncompromising opponent of Islam: Seeing that he was sure to meet his end in Makkah, he fled to Yemen. His wife, Ume Hakim, who had accepted Islam, appealed to the Prophet (s) for asylum on behalf of her husband. Her request was granted. Then she went to Yemen to bring her husband back and came to the Prophet (s).



Reformation of Hearts for Leadership of Islam

Conquerors can afford to be cruel. But Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), chose to be different. He was magnanimous towards his vanquished enemies.

The Quraysh had for over two decades opposed the Prophet and his mission. The Prophet (s) was ridiculed, his companions were tortured, and attempts were made on his life, his family and companions were imprisoned and social boycott was imposed on them for three years. Their only crime was that they had accepted Muhammad (s) as their leader and joined the fold of Islam. The Quraysh spared no stratagem, trick to defeat and destroy Islam. But after three wars and the conquest of Makkah, the Quraysh were a defeated and demoralized lot. Now it could be the turn of the Prophet (s) to avenge for all the excesses perpetrated against him and the Muslims. But the Prophet (s) forgave them declaring that he intended no revenge for harm done to his person. He declared: *La Tasreeb alaikum ul yaum*. (There is no retribution against you today.) He even let the Quraysh keep the properties of Muslims, grabbed by them after they had left Makkah and migrated to Medina. He even allowed them to retain all the traditional designations as

official custodians of the places of pilgrimages and ministerial portfolios of administration of Makkah.

The Prophet (s) was wise enough to pursue the policy of peace and forgiveness following the conquest of Makkah. He knew that leniency and large-heartedness would bring greater dividends of peace for the fledgling Islamic state and would open their hearts for reform. Punishment and revenge would only foster a cycle of revenge. What he envisioned was a genuine change of heart. It was possible only by being lenient and allowing them to repent for their past crimes.

The Quraysh were all well known personalities and held high offices in the administration of Makkah, they were super intellectuals, and had practical capabilities, dignity and influence, experience of rule and command, tact and the ability to achieve through others, understanding of human psychology and above all, they were men whose superiority has already been recognized and established in the public esteem. The Prophet (s) had realized this and that they had great qualities in them. They could be co-opted into the great task of reform, rather than being consigned to the waste-bin of history. The Prophet (s) knew that they were best suited for the leadership of Arabia and can carry the mantle of Islam further into a civilization. The Quraysh had fought bravely for preserving the system of the days of ignorance to which they were committed. They were expected to retain the same degree of commitment to Islam if their honour and esteem remained intact. The Prophet (s) was also firm in his conviction that though faith and piety was the sheet anchor of Islam, the Islamic leadership also needed intellectual calibre, self-esteem, influence, experience of rule and tact and ability to command a wide body of people. Forcibly crushed and humiliated, the Quraysh could be of no use. The Prophet's (s) vision and humility while entering Makkah as the head of the victorious army ensured that the people of Makkah came beseeching his favour rather than his wrath.

It was this grand generosity of spirit that brought about a sea change in the Arabian Peninsula and turned the most implacable foes of Islam into the future standard-bearers of the faith.



‘ O God, I am Innocent ’

After the great conquest of Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) stayed in Makkah for nineteen days, and the situation began to settle down. Before returning to Medina, he sent expeditions to make sure that his alliances with the nearby tribes were solid and that those who had accepted Islam had given up all idol worship. Khalid (r) had been entrusted with such a mission among the Banu Jadhimah, tribe, who eventually surrendered, but Khalid (r) decided, against Abd Ar-Rahman (r), son of Awf's advice, to execute the prisoners towards whom he harbored particular resentment. After executing some of them, he stopped at Abd Ar-Rehman's insistence, the latter having made it clear to him that his behavior was motivated by other intentions than faith in God and justice.

The Prophet (s) was very angry when he heard of Khalid's (r) behavior. He decided to pay blood money for all the dead, and he kept repeating aloud: "*O God, I am innocent of what Khalid has done!*" Prophet Muhammad (s) explicates that if any individual, group or a state does inflict any atrocities on human life including killing of innocents or spreading terrorism in the name of religion or associating it with the Prophet (s) and if those acts are detrimental to Islam, that shall not be considered as Islamic.

The path to the education of hearts and consciences of the Medina and Makkan Muslims had still a long way to go. Deeply rooted habits and old feelings continued to rise to the surface and manifest as behaviors contrary to Islam's precepts. Moreover, the Makkans' mass entry into Islam required additional efforts in religious education. The Prophet (s) asked Ma'az (r) son of Jabal to make this a priority: the new converts to Islam had to be educated and taught the principles of their new religion. The unity in adversity that had prevailed so far had ironically been easier to achieve than the unity in faith, love, and respect that must henceforth be established.

More than the physical path of a life, this was the initiatory journey of a heart and conscience going through the stages of the great *Jihad* that takes people from the natural tension of passions to the peace of spiritual education.

21

HUNAYN

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) realized that he still had to face a number of dangers threatening the Muslim community. All the tribes had not acknowledged the Prophet's (s) authority, and some thought the time had come to overthrow him. Persistent rumors indicated that the Hawazin tribes and their allies had mobilized more than twenty thousand men, east of Makkah and that they were preparing to attack the Muslims. The Prophet (s) sent scouts who confirmed the Rumors: the Muslims had to prepare themselves quickly. All the Muslims who had come from Medina were mobilized, and they were joined by two thousand from the Quraysh. (Most of those Makkan Quraysh had recently embraced Islam, but others such as Suhayl or Safwan, fought along with the Muslims at Hunayn without having become Muslims).

In the battle of Hunayn, the violent tribes of Hawazin and Tha'qif too joined. In the year of 630 C.E., the ninth year of *hijrah*, a pitched battle was fought at Hunayn, about 16 km from Makkah. Muhammad (s) set off with an army of twelve thousand men, the biggest he had ever led. Some, such as Abu Bakr (r), expressed proud confidence as to their numbers and probable victory, which displeased the Prophet (s).

The Hawazin army was led by a young warrior named Malik, son of Awf, who had acquired a solid reputation in the Peninsula. He had ordered his soldiers to take their children with them in order to impress the enemy with their number and stir up the troops. Malik posted a great number of his soldiers in the ravines on either side of the valley. Those men were invisible from the valley. He deployed the rest of the army opposite the gorge so that they faced the Muslims arriving from the bottom of the valley and were thus deliberately visible. The Muslims were advancing in the light of early morning when suddenly Malik ordered the soldiers hiding in the ravines to attack the Prophet's (s) army from both flanks. The surprise was total, and Khalid (r), who marched ahead, could not resist the sudden attack. The Muslim warriors tried to protect themselves. Caught in the narrow parts of the gorge, Muslims army panicked.

Prophet Muhammad (s), who was some distance behind in a more open space, witnessed what was happening; he immediately gathered his closest Companions and began to call the Muslims with the help of Abbas (r), whose voice was more resounding than his own, Muslim army came to join him and re-organized to launch a counter-attack.

The Muslim army then began to march on the enemy with such passion that Malik's Hawazin army were totally astonished; they did not expect such a sudden and massive counter-attack from Muslims.

Among the Muslims was a woman, Ume Sulaym (r), who took part in the battle with her husband and who showed a determination shared by all. It was now their enemies' turn to be compelled to with draw, and then run away, with the Muslim troops following them. Hawazin's army chief Malik eventually found refuge in the city of Taif with the Banu Thaqif, while others had to hide in the mountains. They had lost many men

and suffered a bitter defeat after a most unexpected and extraordinary reversal, Revelation of Quran was later to remind the Muslim believers of the different factual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of that fight:

Assuredly God helped you in many battlefields, and [remember] on the day of Hunayn: your great numbers elated you, but they availed you nothing. The land, vast as it is, constrained you, and you turned back in retreat. But God poured His calm [Sakinah, His Spirit] on the Messenger and on the believers. (Quran, 9 : 25-26)

Spoils of War

The women and children of Hawazin, who had been captured had been placed in a vast enclosure, sheltered from the sun, and properly fed until Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) return. When he came back and saw that most of the captives were rather poorly dressed, he demanded that money be taken from the booty to buy a new garment from the market for each prisoner. He then decided to share out the spoils amounting to forty thousand ounces of silver, twenty four thousand camels and forty thousand goats, but he did not hand over six thousand prisoners, who had become war captives, for he thought the Hawazin would surely send a delegation to ask for them.

Prophet Muhammad (s) began sharing out the goods, and to the Ansar's (Muslims of Medina) surprise, he gave Quraysh, and particularly Abu Sufyan and Hakim (Khadijah's (r) nephew, who had just converted to Islam), an important part of the captured treasure. He did the same with Safwan and Suhayl, both of whom had fought at Hunayn but still hesitated

to embrace Islam. Revelation of Quran had ordered the Prophet (s) to keep part of the booty for: "*Those whose hearts are to be reconciled (to faith)*" (Quran, 9 : 60)

This was not a means to convert people, but rather was intended to strengthen, by a material gift, a faith that had already more or less expressed itself, but remained fragile. The Prophet knew that Safwan and Suhayl were sensitive to faith and that they had fought bravely along with the Muslims, so he gave them large amounts of goods and did not require them to convert to Islam. Muhammad's (s) forgiving attitude at the time of the conquest of Makkah, then his courage and determination during war, and finally his generosity after the battle eventually convinced them that he was indeed a Prophet. As for Abu Sufyan, the Prophet knew, how important social recognition and honor were to him, and Prophet Muhammad (s) confirmed this status on him.

'The Upper hand is better than the Lower hand'

For his part, Hakim expressed some pride when he received his share of the spoils: it was considerable, and Hakim seemed to rejoice at the material gain more than anything else. Prophet Muhammad (s) accompanied that gift with an essential spiritual teaching, reminding Hakim to resist the pride of possessing wealth and adding: "*The upper hand is better than the lower hand.*" The Prophet (s) thereby reminded Hakim that those who are generous with their wealth and care for the poor, making gifts of both themselves and their possessions, are spiritually endowed with a far higher status than those who simply receive or beg. He also advised Hakim to give some of his belongings to his family and all those who depended on him. Furthermore, he taught Hakim to receive in a more dignified manner, so as to give more humbly.

Signs of Loyalty

The Ansar (Medina Muslims) had watched Prophet Muhammad's (s) attitude with astonishment, since in the end almost all of the booty had been shared out among the Makkans. Some began to give public expression to their disappointment or even disapproval, as it seemed to them that Muhammad (s) was privileging his kin, despite all that the people of Medina had done for him when he needed them. When Sa'ad (r) came to him as Ansar's envoy and voiced their complaints, the Prophet (s) listened to him and asked him to gather all the Medina Muslims so that he could speak to them. He talked to them about their respective debts, for, he said, they owed him for his guidance and he owed them for having provided a refuge from persecution. Muhammad (s) declared he had forgotten none of that, and he asked them not to be upset by the way he had shared out the booty, which, after all, was meant to reinforce some people's faith, no more and no less. They should certainly not measure his love for them through the amount of booty they have received. Their love of the possessions of this world had let them to forget the meaning of true love for God, beyond the riches and life of this world. The Quraysh were leaving with sheep and camels, while the Ansar would go home with the Prophet (s), who had decided to settle with them in Medina, his adopted city.

He added: *"Should all people take one path and the Ansar take another, I would take the Ansar's path"* *"May God have Mercy on the Helpers (Ansar, Medina Muslims), their sons and their sons' sons."* The emotions in the group were intense, and many of the Ansar began to weep, for they understood how wrong they had been in their interpretation of the Prophet's attitude and of the signs of his loyalty. His presence was the sign of his love, while the goods he had distributed were simply evidence that he knew some hearts were still attached to illusions of this world.



Ideal Reformer

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) gave his companions, women and men alike, the means and confidence to be independent, to dare to address him without his ever considering it as lack of respect for his status. Through this attitude, the Prophet (s) showed his companions, his deep respect for their intelligence and for their heart: as for them, they loved their Prophet (s), their leader, for this attention, this availability, and the demand to use their abilities to the fullest, by providing freedom to express their thoughts.

The mission of the Prophets has been to reform humanity to the highest levels of excellence. Prophet Muhammad (s) accomplished this task and became a role model for all. He had supremely succeeded in the reformation of his companions in all the spheres of life and made them glittering stars. Hence Muhammad's (s) style was unique, adoptable, and perfectly in tune with human psychology.

A few instances here show his wisdom in reforming the people.

Equal Treatment for Kings and Commoners

The mercy and compassion of Prophet Muhammad (s) was overflowing for all human beings and they all equally shared it in his assembly. All people, whether they were Persians, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Sudanese or Abyssinians, were treated equally by the Prophet (s). Salman Farsi, Suhaib Rumi and Uthmah Najdi, King of Jandal, emperor of Hamir, and Dhumad, chief priest of Yemen and other rulers, were all treated equally along with common people sitting in his company. No distinction was made between one man and another because of his social, political or economic status or the position in society. Whoever came into his presence was given the same treatment with compassion and mercy.

Holistic and Realistic

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) himself lived in a way that his followers could emulate. According to one tradition, some of his Companions boasted of leading pious lives. The first said he did not marry; the second that, he did not eat meat; the third that, he slept on bare ground; and the fourth that he fasted all the time. The Prophet (s) told them, *'Praise be to Allah! I am married and I lead a pious life. I eat meat and I also fast. I sleep and I also keep awake.'*

Thus Prophet Muhammad (s) struck a balance and emphasized that religious activity had to be combined with worldly pursuits. He neither gave excessive credence to material things nor did he undermine the significance of spiritual bliss. He denounced the acquisition of wealth and 'the glitter of the world', but did not favour harshness or abandonment. He did

not divide life between God and Caesar. Islam does not encourage extremism in human behavior; it favours neither mortification of the flesh nor indulgence; it prefers monogamy, but does not insist on it; it allows war under certain conditions but its central message is one of submission to God and of peace. In short, it seeks to regulate human conduct according to man's inherent capacity, requirement and limitation, but it refuses to radically transform human nature, as it is neither physically feasible nor spiritually desirable.

Ruler

The usual procedure and decorum of Prophet Muhammad's (s) assembly was that when somebody asked a question, he would answer him until that problem was solved and his question was fully answered. Unaware of the protocol of assembly, a Bedouin came in and suddenly asked the Prophet (s), "when would Doomsday come?" When he finished his speech, he enquired "*where is the questioner?*" The Bedouin said, "I am here." The Prophet (s) said, "*The Doomsday comes, when people lose trust.*" He asked, "How will the trust be lost?" the Prophet (s) said, "*When the work of the government comes into the hands of incompetent rulers.*" And the Prophet (s) forcefully stated that, "*The kind of rulers you get depends on people's own character.*"

The Rich and the Poor

While addressing the assembly, the Prophet (s) encouraged his companions, especially the poor, to start poultry-farming, because people with very meagre resources could easily start such a business and earn their livelihood. He commanded the rich companions to breed sheep, goats and camels and poor to start poultry farming. In fact, it was a sort of warning to the

rich to confine themselves to industries and businesses which required comparatively larger capital and to leave the small industries and businesses to the poor to earn their livelihood.

It is absolutely necessary to the healthy growth of society that a right and just balance is kept between the different groups. If big capitalists start forming "combines" or "monopolies" by buying or amalgamating small firms and thereby killing all opposition, it will not only close all means of livelihood for the small businessmen and put them to great hardship, but will also lead to class struggle within the community and humanity, thus, permanently destroying their peace and solidarity.

Greed

Contentment is the key to success and happiness; and greed is just contrary to it.

Most of us believe that material wealth would bring us happiness. It can of course buy us comforts, but not the happiness which is internal to our nature and cannot be attained by mad pursuit of material riches. In reality, it is only contentment that ushers us into the realm of happiness with a heart totally at peace with itself and body and soul freed from the clutches of greed. Greed or lust has no end. It grows in geometrical proportions as much as one fulfills it. The following tradition from Prophet Muhammad (s) throws ample light on the natural instincts of human beings :

"If Adam's son is given a valley full of gold, he would like to have two valleys, for nothing fills his mouth except dust. And God forgives him who repents to Him."

Man is ever in the pursuit of wealth and material well-being. Striving for more is inherent to his nature. He is always

eyeing opportunities to get rich, enhance his standard of life, add more to his style, and pursuing dreams of owning fast cars, elegant villas in scenic locales. In short, the wish-list of an individual is endless. He leaves no stone unturned to materialize his ambitions and achieve dreams. Such is our preoccupation with the material pursuits that we often forget the morals and ethics of the game.

Love for this world, with all its enjoyments, may distract us from seeking the Hereafter. We should always remember that the main purpose of our existence is to worship God.

Our Lord discourages us from the blind pursuit of material well-being and dubs the worldly glamour as a fleeting flash of opulence that will distract us from the main objective of remembrance of God. Here is a Quranic verse:

And it is not your wealth, nor your children that bring you nearer to Us, but only he (will please Us) who believes, and does righteous deeds; for such (people), there will be a double reward for what they did, and they will reside in the high dwellings (of Paradise), in peace and security. (Quran, 34: 37)

Corruption

Now that we have zeroed in upon the cause of the greed, let it be told that it is the material lust that drives us to usurping the share of others in the economic cake. Any attempt to fulfill the material greed through illegitimate means deprives the society of justice and equity. In common parlance, this has come to be known as bribery which is rampant in our societies.

The Prophet (s) had warned his followers and companions of illegitimate means of enrichment. On one

occasion, a tax collector (Tehsildar) who came back from his duty furnished the goods collected before the Prophet, and said, this is the tax of the government and this is given to me as a gift; Some of the goods showed by him were described as goods collected as tax (*Zakat*) while another portion of goods were described as gift for himself. Prophet (s) smelt corruption. He immediately addressed the companions in his assembly and said: Look at this collector, who says, 'this is the portion of *Zakat* and this is mine, having come as a gifts'. Now let him stay at home and then see if people still come to offer gifts to him.

Terrorism

Prophet (s) said:

"God gives for gentleness what He does not give for violence or anything else."

Prophet (s) also said:

"Near the Doomsday, unaccounted murders will be common, where the killer will not know his victim and the victim will not know why he was killed or who killed him."

Fourteen hundred years ago, Prophet Muhammad (s) had predicted the tragic situation we are facing today, and millions of innocent people are being killed in terrorist attacks, military raids by hostile countries and due to blockade, restrictions, and embargos on different countries, and also killings by police or military actions on their own citizens in various countries.

Innocents are being killed, they do not know who killed them, and why? And the killers do not know their victims and likewise the people being killed through such means may have no personal enmity with their killers.

Prohibition of Drinking and Gambling

One of the far-reaching and enduring contributions of Prophet Muhammad (s) to the wellbeing of humanity is the prohibition on the consumption of all intoxicating substances, including alcoholic drinks and drugs, and on all forms of gambling. The Quran says that the harmful effects of drinking and gambling far outweigh their limited benefits. The habit of gambling has dangerous and evil consequences for the wider society. It keeps people away from productive pursuits and encourages them to turn to illegitimate means to acquire wealth. In most cases, it brings about the economic ruin of families, leading to indebtedness and even destitution. Furthermore, it weakens the moral fibre of society.

The celebrated British historian Arnold J. Toynbee once observed that one of the most valuable and enduring gifts of Islam to humanity is the prohibition of alcohol.



Equality of Mankind

The principle of universal brotherhood and the doctrine of the equality of mankind which he proclaimed is a very great contribution of Prophet Muhammad (s) to the social upliftment of humanity. All great religions have also preached the same doctrine, but the Prophet Muhammad (s) had put this theory into actual practice and its value will be fully recognized, perhaps, sometime hence, when the international community would awaken, racial prejudices would disappear, and a stronger concept of the brotherhood of humanity comes into existence.

Peasant and King Equal Before God

The great poetess of India Sarojini Naidu, speaking about this aspect of Islam says, "It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque, when the *Azaan* (Call for prayer) is sounded and the worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim, 'God Alone Is Great'." The great poetess of India continues, "I have been struck over and again by this indivisible unity of Islam

that makes man instinctively a brother. When you meet an Egyptian, an Algerian, an Indian and a Turk in London, what matters is that Egypt is the motherland of one and India is the motherland of another."

Pilgrimage of *Hajj*, a Living Testimony

Every year, during the pilgrimage season, the world witnesses the wonderful spectacle of this international exhibition of brotherhood in leveling all distinctions of race, color and rank. Not only do the Europeans, the Americans, the Africans, the Persians, the Russians, the Australians, the Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese and many other nationalities all meet together in Makkah as members of one divine family, but they are all clad in one dress, every person in two simple pieces of white seamless cloth, one piece round the loin and the other piece over the shoulders, bare-headed, without pomp or show, repeating, "Here am I, O God; at Thy command; Thou art One and the Only; Here am I." Thus there remains nothing to differentiate the high from the low and every pilgrim carries home the impression of the international significance of *Hajj*.

In the words of Prof. Hurgronje, "The League of Nations founded by Prophet Muhammad (s) put the principle of international unity and human brotherhood, universal brotherhood on such universal foundations as to show a candle to other nations". He continues: "the fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done towards the realization of the idea of League of Nations."

‘ Racism ’

Whites are not superior to Blacks

Prophet (s) also declared that even if an Abyssinian Black Muslim were to rule over Muslims, he should be obeyed. Prophet (s) eradicated the problem of racial or color discrimination so successfully that, for example;

- Whenever the second Caliph of the Islamic state, known to history as Umar (r), saw Bilal (r), a Negro slave, he immediately stood in reverence and welcomed Bilal (r) by exclaiming, “Here comes our master, here comes our lord”. What a tremendous change was brought about by the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (s) among the Arabs.
- Zayd (r) son of Haritha was a slave. Prophet (s) appointed him as commander over the Muslim Army he sent against the Byzantine (Roman) empire.
- Usamah (r) was a slave, Prophet (s) appointed him as commander of Muslim Army.
- One day Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (r) was sitting next to a Muslim who was black. Abu Dharr (r) addressed him as “black man.” Prophet Muhammad (s) was very displeased on hearing this, and told Abu Dharr (r) to make amends “*Whites are not superior to blacks,*” he added. As soon as the Prophet (s) admonished him, Abu Dharr (r) became conscious of his error. He cast himself to the ground in remorse, and said to the person he had offended: “Stand up, and rub your feet on my face.”
- Even today, we all know how the black Negroes and backward classes are treated by the civilized white races and the upper castes. Consider the state of Bilal (r), a Negro slave in the days of the Prophet of Islam nearly 14 centuries ago. The

role of calling Muslims to prayer was considered to be a position of honor in the early days of Islam and it was offered to this Negro slave. After the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet ordered him to call for prayer and the Negro slave, stood over the roof of the Kaabah, the most historic and the holy place in the Muslim world.

- The Prophet (s) once saw a wealthy Muslim companion gathering up his loose garments to maintain a distance from a poor Muslim sitting next to him. *"Are you scared of his poverty clinging to you?"* the Prophet (s) remarked.
- Prophet Muhammad (s) thus brought about such a mighty transformation that the noblest and purest among Arabs by birth offered their daughters in marriage to Negro slaves.

This is the reason why Goethe, the greatest among the German poets, speaking about the Quran declared that, *"This book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence"*. This is also the reason why George Bernard Shaw says, *"If any religion has a chance of ruling over England, nay, Europe, within the next 100 years; it is Islam."*

22

The Prophet's Love for Medina

After staying in Makkah for two weeks, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to return to Medina. He performed the lesser pilgrimage (*Umrah*) before returning to Medina. He had come to Medina, seeking refuge, but now he felt at home there, even though its culture and habits were so different from those of Makkah, where he had lived for more than half a century before being compelled to leave. He had settled into his new environment of Medina by observing the inhabitants' customs and traditions, their psychological make-up and their hopes, and then gradually integrating many of these dimensions into his own personality. He loved the people of Medina (*Ansar*), with deep, spiritual love that excelled tribe, clan or cultural ties.

Daily life went on, and the number of Muslims increased constantly, compelling the Prophet (s) to pay attention to teachings and to delegate that task to his most faithful and competent Companions.

Hostility was expressed here and there, and Muhammad (s) was still sending small groups of scouts to settle matters, but it was sometimes necessary to fight tribes that remained determined to challenge Medina's supremacy.

Secret of the Hearts

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had sent an expedition to the northern Bedouin tribes, particularly the Banu Murra, who kept attacking the Jewish farmers working on the Fadak oasis, which was under the Prophet's (s) authority. The Muslim army met with strong opposition, and all thirty Muslim soldiers sent on that expedition were killed. The Prophet (s) decided to send another troop of two hundred Muslim soldiers, including 17 year old Usamah (r), son of Zayd (r) ibn Harithah whom the Prophet (s) had long considered as his adoptive son.

The battle was difficult, since numerous tribes had joined together, hoping to defeat the Muslim troops and take over the Fadak oasis and its riches. The situation nevertheless turned to the Muslims' advantage. A member of the Banu Murra tribe mocked Usamah (r) and his young age. Unable to control himself, Usamah (r) decided to fight it out then and there with the man who insulted him. In a weak position, the Bedouin chose to run away. Usamah (r), in his anger, pursued him, ignoring the expedition leader's order to stay together at all times. Usamah (r) managed to catch up with his enemy, threw him down, and wounded him. The Bedouin cried: "I bear witness that there is no god but God!" (*la ilaha illa Allah*), but Usamah (r) ignored this and killed the man. When he returned to the camp and told his story, the troop leader and all the other soldiers were shocked at his behavior and he realized his serious mistake.

On returning to Medina, Usamah (r) promptly went to see the Prophet (s), who first greeted him most warmly, happy to learn about the victory. When he told him about the duel, however, the Prophet (s) expressed severe disapproval and asked: "Usamah, did you kill him after he had said, 'There is no god

but God?" Usamah (r) replied that the Bedouin had only uttered the words to avoid being killed, and the Prophet (s) replied angrily: *"Did you split his heart open to know whether he was saying the truth or lying?"* Usamah (r) was horrified and feared his mistake would never be forgiven. The Prophet (s) nevertheless forgave him, after conveying to him an essential teaching about the way one should deal with people and the secrets of their hearts, whether in war or in peace.

The Bedouin's profession of faith required that Usamah (r) should not kill him. If he was sincere, his life should obviously have been spared. If he was not, his exclamation amounted to an appeal for peace and clemency. In such a case, Revelation of Quran had already enjoined the Muslims to show judgment, acumen and restraint and to seek peace:

O you who believe! When you go out in the cause of God, investigate carefully, and do not say to anyone who offers you peace: "You are not a believer!" – coveting the perishable goods of this life: with God there are abundant gains. You yourselves were thus before, till God conferred on you His favors: therefore carefully investigate. For God is aware of all that you do. (Quran, 4 : 94)

The Bedouin, when he saw death coming, had appealed for peace, but Usamah (r), blinded by his determination to defend his honor in this world (since he had been mocked), had reverted to tribal practices, which his understanding of Islam ought to have reformed. Whatever his interpretation of the intentions behind his enemy's profession of faith, nothing could justify his actions or his attitude. Usamah (r) promised himself he would never again be carried away in this manner and he would henceforth act with acumen, judgment and respect. It is to Usamah (r), as we shall see, that three years later – when Prophet Muhammad (s) was about to leave this world, he

entrusted the recommendations and teachings that constitute Islamic war ethics.

What lies in people's hearts is beyond the limits of human knowledge, and Prophet Muhammad (s) himself was an example of cautiousness and humility when it came to judging individuals whose sincerity or intentions were doubtful. The Prophet (s) was well aware of the presence of many hypocrites around him, but he took no particular action on them. He remained cautious, sometimes wary, but he avoided any final judgment.

Tabuk

The news from the north was rather alarming. Everything suggested that Heraclius's Byzantine (Roman) armies had allied with pro-Roman Arab tribes and that together, they were preparing a full-scale attack against Prophet Muhammad (s), "the new Emperor of the Arabs." An immediate action was required and the stakes were so important and the expedition so dangerous that for the first time the Prophet (s) informed all his Companions of his destination. They were to march to the north preventively, in order to anticipate the advance of enemy troops and if necessary, surprise them on their own territory. The season was not favorable and the army was going to face intense heat until they reached the north. The Prophet (s) asked the Companions to contribute as much as they could to pay the cost of the expedition. Umar (r) gave half his fortune and understood this as a lesson in invalidation of one's own needs, Abu Bakr (r), put everything he had at the Prophet's (s) disposal. Usman (r) similarly stood out by supplying mounts for half the army. All the camels and horses in the area were requisitioned, but they were not sufficient to provide for the needs of all the soldiers; as a result, the Prophet (s) had to refuse some Companions' requests to participate in the expedition, and some

of them wept, as they knew the criticality of the expedition. The expected might of the enemy was such that the Muslim community's future was clearly at stake.

The Muslim army set out towards the grey, rocky hills of Tabuk, 500 km from Medina on the route to Syria, at the end of the year 630 C.E, the ninth year of *hijrah*. There were 30,000 Muslim soldiers marching against Rome, the biggest force ever seen in this part of Arab peninsula and the Prophet Muhammad (s) was in command. Rome was a great power and had organized a force of over one lakh strong on the frontiers of the Islamic state. It was the first occasion for the Islamic state to make a show of its military power and strength to a foreign power.

But still, the Muslim force was numerically small by Roman military standards. However, the enemy was so much impressed by the will and determination of Prophet Muhammad (s) that they did not have the courage to come and face him on the battlefield. This courageous and bold venture of Muhammad (s) paid rich dividends in terms of many political and friendly pacts and treaties with the rulers of the neighboring regions and of militarily suppressing the spirit and designs of Arab tribesmen and other potential enemies of Islam.

Although it had been very tiring, the expedition did not turn out to be useless. The considerable number of Muslim soldiers impressed the whole of the Arab Peninsula, forcing the northern tribes to realize the extent of Prophet Muhammad's (s) capacity to raise troops and his forces' incredible mobility. As a result, the Prophet's (s) prestige was much enhanced, and a large number of deputations representing tribes from Yemen and other far-away regions came and paid homage to Muhammad (s) and accepted Islam.

From Tabuk, the Prophet (s) managed to set up alliances with a Christian tribe and a Jewish one: they practiced their

respective religions and accepted to pay a tax (*Jizyah*) in exchange for their protection by the Muslim community against attack. Thus, the *Jizyah* was understood as a collective military tax paid by tribes, who did not have to share in the Muslims' military engagements, but in exchange for which the Muslim authority was to ensure their defense, their protection, and their survival if necessary.

From Tabuk, the Prophet (s) sent Khalid (r) further north to draw an alliance with tribes in order to secure the route leading to Iraq and Syria. All those operations were successful, and the Prophet (s) went back to Medina with the Muslim army.

The Delegations

The ninth year of *Hijrah* was named "the year of the delegations": the Muslim community now enjoyed such power and recognition, that envoys came from all over the Peninsula to draw up alliances or sign covenants. The first to come to Prophet Muhammad (s) were the Banu Tha'qif, for Malik (r) Hawazin tribe chief had subjected their city to such a siege that it was impossible for them to conclude any alliance with the neighboring tribes [most of who had anyway either embraced Islam or established a treaty with Muhammad (s)]. Banu Tha'qif declared they wanted to become Muslims, but they wished to negotiate elements of their faith and practice: they wanted to maintain the cult of their idol al-Lat and to be exempted from prayer. The Prophet (s) refused to negotiate about those points, as he did whenever he was asked, for accepting Islam meant worshipping none, but the One God and praying to Him according to the norms established by revelation and the Prophet's (s) example. They eventually accepted the terms of agreement.

Other envoys from Jewish or Christian tribes also came to Prophet Muhammad (s), and he did not compel them to accept Islam. For them, as he had done with the two northern tribes, he drew up an assistance pact: they would pay the collective military tax (*Jizyah*), and Prophet Muhammad (s) and his army would ensure their protection and defense. Thus, throughout the Peninsula, the message was clear: the tribes who accepted Islam were to give up any idea of a different belief or system. The Prophet (s) did not negotiate over the fundamentals of faith. As soon as the profession of faith had been pronounced, previous religious status were to be destroyed, and Islamic practices were to be fully implemented, from prayer and fasting to the payment of purifying social tax (*Zakat*) and pilgrimage. When tribes wanted to remain faithful to their tradition, they drew up a pact with similarly clear terms: the payment of tax (*Jizyah*) in exchange for protection. The Prophet (s) let the clans and chiefs choose freely between these two alternatives, which many of them did during the months that followed the return from Tabuk.



HUMAN RIGHTS

The West very vociferously claims that the basic concept of human rights became known to the world for the first time from the British Magna Carta. But they Conveniently have forgotten that the Magna Carta came into existence six hundred years after the advent of Islam.

The fact is that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) gave the total concept and model of human rights irrespective of distinctions of race, color, tribe, religion, and so on. He proved that a person must be valued for his/her conduct and merit as per the Quran:

O Mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other and not that you may despise each other. Surely the most honored of you in the Sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you." Verily God is All-Knowing and is Well-Aware (of all things).

(Quran, 49 : 13)

This verse from the Quran addresses the entire humankind; it is not confined to Muslims alone. It emphasizes the equality of mankind, clarifying that all human beings have descended from the same parents and that the distinctions of their clans, tribes, races and nations are only for the purpose of identification, or to know the different people of the world in different places.

This biological unity of mankind was a fact, about which the Prophet Muhammad (s) said, *"O God, I bear witness that all human beings are brothers"* We find a practical example of this unity in the life of Prophet Muhammad (s). Once, the Prophet (s) was with his Companions, and a funeral procession passed by. The Prophet (s) stood up in respect for the deceased. The Muslims were surprised and said to the Prophet (s) that this was a Jew's funeral. The Prophet (s) asked them with clarity and dignity: *"Was this not a human soul?"*

Islam accords such a high value to human life that the Quran commands:

... The unjust killing of a single human being is considered equivalent to the assassination of the whole of mankind. And the protection of a single human life is equivalent to the protection of the whole of mankind ... (Quran, 5 : 32)

This is stated in the Quran with reference to the murder of Prophet Adam's (a.s) son Abel by his elder brother Cain. This was the first crime and first violation of human rights in human history.

Prophet Muhammad (s) presented to the world the first and truly international charter of human rights. It enshrines a complete set of inalienable and fundamental rights that are the essential part of the Constitution of the Islamic polity.

The following set of rules that are compulsory constituents of Islam give an overview of human rights accorded by Islam:

1. The unity, equality, and brotherhood of humankind, irrespective of their differentiations based on race, color, caste or class. This is a prime tenet of Islam. The Islamic charter of human rights consists of this tenet as the core constituent.
2. The Islamic life is highly imbued with a deep sense of humanism. This is evident in Islam's stress on as the fundamental right of human beings to live. The Prophet (s) set an example in this regard by liberating slaves and providing them humane treatment. He prohibited female infanticide, and emphasized sincerity, altruism and compassion in inter-personal relations. He also demonstrated care for human rights and humane ethics in war.
3. The Islamic charter of human rights includes justice as a cardinal principle. In an Islamic state, all citizens have equal rights. Every citizen, Muslim and non-Muslim alike is entitled to justice as regards to civic rights, means of livelihood, and role in the political process. The uniqueness of an Islamic state is such that the Islamic law permits no exemption or allows no favor to the head of state. The Caliph or ruler of an Islamic state and the common man are equal before law.
4. The ideas of tolerance and multiculturalism have found little place in the discourse of western social sciences as recently as the last two decades. But Prophet Muhammad (s) and his companions have pronounced and demonstrated the principles of tolerance and peaceful co-existence more than

fourteen hundred years ago. The Islamic state included not only Muslims, but also Jews, Christians and pagan Arabs. All of them were given and guaranteed religious, cultural, and judicial autonomy. The Islamic state was responsible for the maintenance of Jewish and Christian identities, and at times assumed the role of defending them.

5. The protection and guarantee of minority rights under the Islamic governance has no parallel in the annals of civilizations.

Prophet Muhammad (s) forcefully stated:

"Whoever oppresses any non-Muslim subject of the Islamic state, I shall be his prosecutor on the Day of Judgment."


6. Prophet Muhammad (s) issued a charter of rights to the Christian population of Najran. It contained the following assurances:

- On behalf of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (s), an assurance is hereby extended, to the people (Christians) of Najran, that their lives, religion, lands and wealth will be protected.
- No change will be made in their existing conditions. Their rights will be protected, none will be violated.
- *Their business delegations and trade caravans will be protected. No cardinal will be dismissed from his post, nor will a hermit be denied a right to his way of life.*
- *The custodians of churches will not be disturbed; they can discharge their duties without any*

interference.

- The Muslim army will not enter their areas.
- Christians will not be obliged to pay the tithe-tax.

7. The Islamic charter of human rights accords an honorable and dignified status to women and takes due cognizance of their legitimate rights pertaining to education, marital relationship, ownership of property, and inheritance.





Encouragement of Youth

A few months after his return to Medina, in the eleventh year of *Hijrah*, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) decided to send an expedition to the north, near Syria and Palestine, where a few years earlier, his companions, Jafar (r), Abdullah (r), and Zayd (r) had been killed. To everyone's surprise, Prophet (s) gave the command to young Usamah (r), Zayd's (r) son, who was only twenty years old, though this 3000 strong army included such men as Umar (r), Abu Bakr (r), Ali (r), Usman (r), and others experienced companions. This choice gave rise to much criticism, but the Prophet (s) reacted very promptly and put an end to all arguments when he proclaimed:

"You criticize the choice of Usamah to command the army, as you had formerly criticized that of his father Zayd. Usamah is truly worthy of the command I entrust him with, as his father was before him."

In the past, some Muslims had reacted to the choice of Zayd because they still considered him as a slave though he had been freed; now some opposed the choice of his son, perhaps because of his father, but mostly because of his young age. By

confirming his choice, the Prophet (s) informed the companions that neither a man's social origin nor his age should prevent him from exerting authority and power if he possessed the spiritual, intellectual, and moral qualities required. One had to show judgment by offering the most poor in the society real equality of opportunity and trusting the young, so that everybody could express their skills and talents. On a more general level, this was a fine lesson in humility addressed to older companions: they were to experience the inner, greater *Jihad* of obeying a man who could have been their son and in doing so remember that their time was limited. By that choice, the Prophet (s) taught them that time naturally exhausts one's energy, and one must be wise enough to learn to step aside, to delegate authority to those who are young and strong enough to create and build.



War Ethics

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) gave young Usamah (r) his recommendation and asked him to set out promptly. However, the Prophet's (s) sudden illness was to delay that departure and the army waited near Medina. A few weeks later, Abu Bakr (r), according to the Prophet's (s) wish, asked Usamah to carry out the expedition. He reminded him of the Prophet's (s) teachings concerning war ethics, for the latter had constantly insisted on the principles Muslims must respect when dealing with their enemies. "Do not kill women, children and old people," Abu Bakr (r) ordered him. "Do not commit unfaithful actions. Do not stray from the right path, never damage. Do not destroy trees, do not burn houses and cornfields, do not cut down fruit trees, and do not kill livestock except when you are compelled to eat them. As you move on, you will meet hermits who live in monasteries and serve God in seclusion. Leave them alone; do not kill them and do not destroy their monasteries." These teachings were essential and they were conveyed to Usamah (r) in the light of what the Prophet (s) had said in various circumstances about warfare, respect for nature, and how to treat animals.

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Prophet's concept of War

Pre-Islamic and non-Islamic wars were no more than robbing, killing, plundering, tyranny and aggression oriented wars. Those wars focused on winning victory, oppressing the weak and destroying houses, properties crops, farm lands, even entire villages and towns. War was a means by which they could rape or unveil women, practices cruelty against elders, children and animals, and spread corruption on the earth. The conquered people's places of worship and historical monuments were destroyed. Fighting a war within the boundaries of moral principles was a concept that had long since vanished from human consciousness.

Islamic wars are different from non-Islamic wars. A "war" in Islam is a noble sacred fight in the 'way of God' for the promotion of a society that seeks to free man from cruelty, oppression and aggression. Prophet Muhammad (s) changed the standards and aims of non-Islamic wars. Prophet Muhammad (s) stressed the observance of several important moral principles during the tumult of warfare. First, he fundamentally redefined the basic understanding and concept of war.

Jihad - fee - sabi - lillah

Resistance in the Way of God

By introducing an entirely new term – *Jihad-fee-sabi-lillah* – (resistance in the way of God), Prophet Muhammad (s) purified warfare from its purely material or vested interests and self-serving motives. By adding “in the way of God” (*fee-sabi-lillah*), he taught that war must not be waged for the sake of the self, for spoils, pride, prestige, or subjugation and oppression of other people. This belief served as the glue holding the principles of warfare together.

Under this new conception of war, the Prophet (s) introduced a comprehensive set of laws that encompassed the conduct of war: its moral boundaries, components, rights and obligations; the difference between combatants and non-combatants and their rights; and the right of envoys, prisoners of war and conquered people. All of these principles were expressed clearly and unequivocally by Prophet Muhammad (s).

The Prophet (s) also underscored the sanctity and inviolability of human life, be it Muslim or non-Muslim.

Islam accords such a high value to human life that the Quran commands:

The unjust killing of a single human being is considered equivalent to the assassination of the whole of mankind. And the protection of a single human life is equivalent to the protection of the whole of mankind... (Please ref. Quran 5:27-32)

Through this divine instruction, the Prophet (s) purified war from all selfish motives and ulterior objectives.

Every prophet had his own approach and own style of functioning; each came at a different time and worked among different people. To compare one prophet with another would be of no avail, and indeed the Quran specifically forbids this. True, Prophet Jesus (a.s) fought no wars, but there was no need for him to do so. But Prophet Muhammad (s), as we have seen, had to fight to survive.

When Muhammad (s) was raised to the office of Prophethood, he invited people to the way of peace, but Makkan Quraysh chief's opposed him, abused him, and persistently persecuted him and his companions for years, confiscated their property and drove them out of Makkah. They pursued Muslims even after they had gone into their exile in Medina and called upon the people of Medina either to expel their enemy, Muhammad (s), or to eliminate him altogether. In the event of their failure to comply with the demand, the people of Medina were warned of dire consequences. The Makkan chief sent a message to Abdullah, son of Abayy, a hypocrite that he had given refuge to their criminal and that he should kill him otherwise, they would attack Medina and destroy them along with Muhammad (s). When there was no other alternate but to die or offer organized resistance to defend his faith, Muhammad (s) chose the latter.

Thus, wars were forced on him by his enemies, for he had no intention of fighting. His wars have, therefore, to be viewed from a larger historical perspective. Those wars were, no doubt, religious wars because it was his religion, i.e. Islam, that was constantly attacked.

The threat of military invasion could not be taken lightly by any responsible leader, least of all by the Prophet (s) who had to set an example for everyone and leave behind a model for Rulers and military commanders of the succeeding generation.

Prophet Muhammad (s) did not prescribe war as a natural state of affairs, but at the same time, war cannot simply be abolished. What any reformer or spiritual leader can do, is minimize its brutality. The Prophet (s), at God's direction, attempted to establish rules of warfare that would make war as humane as possible, to encourage peace and to minimize the loss of human lives.

Thus, the Prophet Muhammad (s) scored huge victories through his skillful employment of small forces against numerically very strong enemies. Within a period of seven to eight years, he vanquished all his enemies and completely destroyed or weakens their power and aggression. In all his 28 battles and 38 campaigns, his loss in men was only 255 against his enemies' loss of 759. The prisoners taken by the Muslims numbered 6,564, but they were all released except two, who were charged for criminal offences. With the loss of 1,014 lives in eight years of his military campaigns, he established peace and order in the whole of the Arab Peninsula. The rule of evil, vice and oppression was brought to an end and instead, the rule of goodness, virtue and justice for all was established in the land. This was a miracle of Prophet Muhammad's (s) ingenious employment of minimal force to achieve maximum results.

The great historian H. Lammens points out, "In the Middle ages, when wars consumed thousands of men on either side, these figures (1,014) indicate the restraint, compassion and consideration for human life that Muhammad (s) exercised. He cannot, therefore, be termed a warrior. He held every life sacred, and he abhorred the shedding of blood unless for a just cause. His life was dedicated to peace.

Compare this to other revolutions that have been brought about only with wars – big wars that continued for years together – killing millions of innocent people. The extent of loss of human lives in these revolutions is enormously high.

Hindu teachings prescribe war as the final option, to be employed only after all peaceful methods are exhausted. But, when this time comes, war is taught to be a matter of great personal and religious importance, where every man must do his duty (if he belongs to the warrior caste), exemplify courage, honor and fearsome prowess against all the odds, and even at high cost of life.

According to the Wikipedia, the most destructive wars in Hindu tradition were driven with the mission of good triumphing over evil. The Kurukshetra war has its unique record in terms of casualties. Forty lakh soldiers perished in a span of 18 days. This equals to around two lakh twenty thousand deaths per day, that too, without weapons of mass destruction like atom bombs or chemical gases. These deaths were caused using bows, arrows and maces only.

20th century - The most violent Century

Aggression and violence seem to be universal and endemic in human society. The 20th century was the most violent century in human history. Some of the most horrifying massacres and genocides occurred during the 20th century. The two World Wars took a massive, unprecedented toll of human lives and left tens of millions of people destitute and homeless.

An estimated 10 million people were killed in World War I, 21 million wounded and about 7.7 million reported missing or imprisoned.

In World War II, between 38 and 60 million people were killed and millions were wounded and made homeless.

During the final stages of World War II the United States conducted two atomic bombings against the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, which

killed more than 2 lakh innocent people and lakhs wounded and made homeless.

The Russian revolution killed 13 lakh people.

The French revolution killed two lakh forty thousand people.

The Chinese Communist revolution killed between 14 to 20 lakh people.

Mussolini of Italy, waged aggressive war against Northern African Muslim Countries, such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, and killed more than four lakh innocent Muslims.

The Russian civil war waged by Soviet leader Stalin killed two crore people. Majority of Victims were Muslims.

Adolf Hitler killed 11 to 17 million people.

An estimated 6 million Jews were brutally killed during World War II.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina war killed more than two lakh innocent Muslims. According to the International Court of Justice at The Hague, the crimes committed during the Bosnian war "amounted to crimes against humanity."

This sort of killing spree is still going on, under the pretext of 'war on terrorism,' and for geopolitical interests.

The total of all casualties on all the sides in all the battles of Muhammad (s) is not more than 1,014 dead; the percentage of people killed in these wars, relative to the number of people who participated in them amounted to about 1.5 %. Since the Prophet (s) was victorious in most of these battles, the numbers

of casualties indicate that he is not to be counted among the ruthless and barbaric warlords, conquerors, and military generals of human history. The truth is, in fact, far from it.

Compare the above numbers to other wars in human history. For example, in the World War II alone, the relationship between the number of people killed (including civilians) to the amount of combatants who were involved in that war was 571%. That is, 10, 600, 000 participated in that war yet the number of human deaths were as high as 54, 800, 000.

Enemies and biased people portray Prophet Muhammad (s) as a war-monger and blood-thirsty, as if fighting battles was his main occupation. But, in reality, out of the ten years of his life in Medina, only 795 days were spent in battles and expeditions. The rest of the ten years (that is, approximately 2865 days) he spent on bringing revolutionary changes to people's lives and totally reforming a pagan society. This historical fact is overlooked by some of his biased biographers and some anti-Islam Western writers who depict him as a war-monger.

Prophet Muhammad's (s) wisdom and skill in so effectively and successfully using various factors in his war strategy and military operations has, surprised generations of professional military leaders. He organized his resistance in almost every battle better and more successfully and maintained complete secrecy regarding his plans. He employed the elements of surprise, speed and mobility so successfully in his campaigns that the enemy was often caught unprepared. He used the psychological factor better and more effectively than his enemies could ever have dreamed of. He organized an intelligence service and commando units to achieve this objective.

Prophet (s) left no stone unturned in training his companions in the art of war and the skills of fighting and in preparing the instruments of war more effectively and carefully

than his enemies did. Finally, he inspired his companions with the truth of his cause in such a manner as no man in history had ever done before. He gave them an objective which inspired confidence in them. His companions were willing, at his command, to jump into the fire or the sea, and no sacrifice was too great for them and value too high. They went forward into the enemy lines fighting bravely without care for the consequences. They were certain of the truth of their cause.

Muslims are regarded by some enemies and ignorant people as fundamentalists or terrorists, an attitude stemming from the old prejudices of the past. For long it was commonly believed that Prophet Muhammad (s) gave to non-Muslims only two choices: the Quran or the sword, and further that Islam spread through the sword. Eminent British historian Sir Thomas Arnold, after much painstaking research, collected facts and figures for his monumental work "The Preaching of Islam" and proved that Islam was spread, not by the exploits of that mythical personage – the Muslim warrior with a sword in one hand and the Quran in the other' – but by the force of the teachings of the Quran and the character of Prophet Muhammad (s).

Is there any military commander in history who conducted his military campaigns and war victories with such magnanimity? Is there any military leader who was so generous, humane and forgiving in victory? Is there any commander who achieved so many successes with so little loss of human life? Is there any military leader in history who established law and order over such a vast territory in such a short time? Is there any military leader in history who left a noble legacy which changed the course of human history and influenced human culture and activity in every area of life?

It is tragic that the Prophet Muhammad (s) is known only as a founder of religion and even that, in a very narrow and

limited sense of the word. No or very little attention has been paid to his dynamic role in influencing every area of human culture. Humanity in general and Muslims in particular, owe a heavy debt to him for his being an educator and a real benefactor of humanity. The most appropriate and befitting tribute that can be paid to him is to unfold the immensity of his dynamic influence on the various aspects of human life, so that people may benefit from it, and thereby enrich humanity by their healthy, virtuous, just and peaceful way of life.

Washington Irving, an American author, biographer and historian, in his '*Life of Mohomet*,' comments: " Prophet Muhammad's military triumphs awakened no pride nor vain glory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power, he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearance as in the days of his adversity. "

Famous American historian H. Lammens writes: "Even at the zenith of his glory and success, when at the time of the great conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (s) looked and behaved a very humble soul. Makkah lay at his feet and the defeated Quraysh came forward one after another to take the oath of loyalty, he saw an old man approaching him rather timidly with faltering steps. Muhammad (s) the conqueror of Makkah in a very humble manner consoled him, and said : " I am not a king; I am an ordinary man, humble as you are. I also eat what you eat; the same sun shines upon me as on you. "

When this most successful statesman, Prophet Muhammad (s) departed from this world, he was the custodian and ruler of thirty lakh square miles of the Arabian Peninsula. During his ten years of stay in Medina, on an average 845 square miles of land had been adding to the Islamic state every day. When this greatest saviour of humanity left this world, he did not even have oil to light a lamp in his house.

24

MARRIAGES

Polygamy and Monogamy

Strictly speaking, polygamy means the plurality of mates. More specifically, if a man has more than one wife at the same time, this is called polygamy. Monogamy is the practice of having only marital partner at a time.

Western Weapon

Enemies and ignorant people have criticized Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) over his multiple marriages without ever seriously studying the nature, manner and purpose of these marriages. All the criticisms are made without any historical support for it, nor on any rational grounds worth considering. It is from sheer ignorance, religious prejudice or hatred for the Prophet (s) of Islam and his unique philosophy of life, from which the criticizers are benefitting without recognizing it, that such controversy is raised now and then to overshadow and undermine the Prophet's (s) true contributions

to human culture and civilization.

The list of Prophet Muhammad's (s) detractors is long; it includes some of the greatest names in the west. However, both Muhammad (s) and his religion have survived their onslaught; in the last fifteen hundred years Islam has attracted more converts in every age and in every land than any other religion. History shows that the more Islam is suppressed, the stronger it becomes.

At the outset, we must not forget that monogamy, a western weapon for enforcement of morality, is a recent phenomenon; in the middle ages, polygamy was prevalent in most parts of the world. Men took hundreds of wives as a measure of social status. Except for Christ, who was celibate, most prophets were much-married men – even saints kept concubines. In Arabia, women were treated worse than chattels; fathers buried their new-born daughters alive. Marriages were contracted for social convenience, and divorces were common and were not looked down upon; in today's west, sexual promiscuity (Indiscriminate casual sex with many sexual partners) has become a norm.

Even today, polygamy is practiced among Muslims and non-Muslims of the West and the East, some of which are legal, and some illegal and hypocritical; some in secret and some in public. It does not require much research to find out where and how a great number of married people maintain private mistresses, or spare sweethearts, or visit their beloved ones, or simply go around with other women. Whether moralists like it or not, the point remains that; illegal polygamy is in practice and it can be seen everywhere.

Judaism

Biblical and Talmudic times show that ancient Israelites were polygamous, some having hundreds of wives. The Talmudic Law and Mosaic Law encouraged it and most of their prophets had more than one wife. According to the *Wikipedia*, Prophet Abraham (a.s) had two wives (Sarah, and Hajar), Prophet Solomon (a.s) had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, Prophet Jacob (a.s) had four wives. Prophet David (a.s) had eight wives and *Prophet Moses* (a.s) had four wives (Safire, Gibshia, bint Kini, bint Hubab); According to the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, "A common Jew could take as many as four wives, and a king up to eighteen."

The practice of polygamy continued till Rabbi Gershom bin Yehudah (960 C.E to 1030 C.E) issued an edict against it. The Jewish Sephardic communities continued the practice till as late as 1950, until an Act of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel extended the ban on marrying more than one wife.

However, it is not right that Judaism has always been monogamous or categorically opposed to polygamy, not even today. (Jewish scholar Goitein informed that pp. 184-185), that polygamous Jewish immigrants cause the Israeli housing authorities a great deal of both difficulty and embarrassment.

Christianity

During the time of Biblical revelations, polygamy was commonly accepted and practiced. Prophet Jesus (a.s) was not known to have spoken against polygamy. It was accepted religiously, socially, and morally; and there was no objection to it. Perhaps this is why the Bible itself did not deal with the subject. The Bible does not forbid it or regulate it or even restrict it. Some people have interpreted the ten-virgin story of the Bible as a sanction for maintaining ten wives at a time. The stories of biblical prophets, kings, and patriarchs in this regard are incredible.

There are many examples of Christian kings marrying more than one woman. Fredrick Wilhelm II and Philip married more than one wife with the approval of the church and St. Luther himself. The Nuremburg Conference of 1650 agreed to allow people to marry more than one wife in order to solve the problem of under-population.

As recent as the 17th century, polygamy was practiced and accepted by the Christian church. The Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints) has allowed and practiced polygamy.

This shows that the institution of polygamy has always been practiced as a lawful institution by all nations in all times, even the Prophets of Jews had several wives and Prophet Jesus (a.s) also did not forbid it.

Monogamy was introduced into Christianity at the time of Paul when many revisions took place in Christianity. This was done in order for the Church to conform to the Greco-Roman culture where men were monogamous, but owned many

slaves who were free for them to use: in other words, unrestricted polygamy.

Early Christians invented ideas that women were "full of sin" and man was better off to "never marry". Since this would be the end of mankind, these same people compromised and said "marry only one".

Hinduism

Since ancient times, polygamy has been an established institution of human society and part and parcel of every known civilization in history. In ancient India, having multiple wives was not only permitted by common custom, but was commonly practiced. Many Hindu religious personalities, according to *Wikipedia*, Rig-Veda and other Hindu religious books mention the multiple wives, of King Dashrat, father of Sri Rama, had more than three wives namely, Kaushalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi. Sri Krishna had 16,100 wives, prominent among them are, Radha, Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavati, Satya, Lakshmana, Kalindi, Bhadra and Mitravinda.

Hindu scriptures whether it be the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharat, or the Geeta does not mention any restriction on the number of wives or According to these scriptures, one can marry as many as one wishes. It was only in 1955 when the Hindu Marriage Act was passed that it became illegal for a Hindu to have more than one wife. At present it is the "Indian Law" that restricts a Hindu man from having more than one wife and not the "Hindu scriptures."

Western Society

In Western society, often when relations are strained, the husband simply deserts his wife. Then he cohabits with other women without marriage. There are three kinds of polygamy practiced in Western societies: (1) serial polygamy, that is, marriage, divorce, marriage, divorce and so on any number of times; (2) a man married to one woman, but having and supporting one or more mistresses; (3) an unmarried man having a number of mistresses.

The West does not admit it, but in practice, it is a polygamous society. In the words of Dr. Annie Besant, "There is pretentious monogamy in the West, but there is really a polygamy without responsibility; the mistress is cast off when the man is weary of her, and sinks gradually to be a woman of the street, for the first lover has no responsibility for her future and she is hundred times worse off than the sheltered wife and mother in a polygamous home. When we see thousands of miserable women who crowd the streets of Western towns at night, we must surely feel that it does not within the westerners' mouth to reproach Islam for polygamy. It is better for women, and more respectable for women, to live in polygamy, united to one man only, with the legitimate child in her arms, and surrounded with respect, than to be reduced, cast out in the streets – perhaps with an illegitimate child outside the pale of law – unsheltered and uncared for, to become the victim of any passerby, night after night and rendered incapable of motherhood and despised by all."

The present Western society which permits free sex between consenting adults has given rise to irresponsible sexual relationships, an abundance of "fatherless" children, many

unmarried teenage mothers; all becoming a burden on the countries' welfare system.

Some western men take the position that monogamy protects the right of women. But are these men really concerned about the rights of women? Their society has so many practices which exploit and suppress women, leading to women's liberation movements from the suffragettes of the early twentieth century to the feminists of today.

In Western societies, the truth of the matter is that monogamy protects men, allowing them to "play around" without responsibility. Easy birth control and easy legal abortion has opened the door of illicit sex to women and she has been lured into the so-called sexual revolution. But she is still the one who suffers the trauma of abortion and the side effects of the birth control methods. Taking aside the plagues of venereal diseases, like herpes and AIDS, the male continues to enjoy himself free of worry. Men are the ones protected by monogamy while women continue to be victims of men's desires. Polygamy is very much opposed by the male dominated society because it would force men to face up to responsibility and fidelity. It would force them to take responsibility for their polygamous inclinations and protect and provide for women and children.

Islam

Turning to the case of Islam, we find many people in the western and eastern world who think that a Muslim is a man who is possessed by physical passion and is himself in possession of a number of wives, limited or unlimited. They think that the Muslim is at full liberty to shift from one wife or a number of wives to another, and that this is as easy as shifting from one apartment to another, or even as changing one's suit. This is aggravated partly by sensational motion pictures, T.V. serials, cheap paperback stories, wrong portrayal in media and partly by the irresponsible behavior of some Muslim individuals.

Unfortunately for Islam, what the Quran prescribed and the Prophet practiced, most Muslim rulers defied with impunity (exemption from punishment, harm, or recrimination) and to ease their conscience, had traditions concocted in Muhammad's (s) name, which did considerable damage to his image and provided colorful material for the enemies of Islam.

The inevitable result of these traditions is that stationary barriers have been created, preventing the brilliant lights of Islam from shining. This is for such people that an attempt is made to explain Islam objectively in the following explanations, after which anybody is free to draw his or her own conclusions.

When the religion of Islam was presented by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the practice of polygamy was common and deeply-rooted in the social life. The Quran did not ignore the practice or discard it, nor did it let it continue unchecked or unrestricted. The Quran could not be indifferent or tolerant of the chaos and irresponsibility associated with polygamy. As it did with other prevailing social customs and practices, the Quran stepped in to organize the institution and

polish it in such a way as to eradicate its traditional evils and insure its benefits. The Quran interfered because it had to be realistic and could not condone any chaos in the family structure which is the very foundation of society.

Quran is the only religious book that says 'Marry only one'.

The context of this phrase is the following verse from Quran, Chapter 3 *An-Nisa*:

"Marry women who seem good to you, two or three or four, and if you fear that you shall not deal justly (with many) then (marry) only one."

Before the Quran was revealed, there was no upper limit for polygamy and men had scores of wives, some even hundreds. The Quran, in any case, restricts the number of wives to four, and that, too, is hedged with several conditions. A man must treat all his wives equally, even in love and this instruction was accompanied by an explicit assertion that it was not possible to do so.

You will never be able to deal justly between wives however much you desire (to do so). But (if you have more than one wife) do not turn al-together away (from one), leaving her as in suspense...

(Quran, 4 : 129)

The Prophet Muhammad (s) is reported to have said that if a man has two wives and if he is unduly inclined towards one at the expense of the other, half of his body will be dangling on one side (as in disability) on the Day of Judgment. Thus Islam regards monogamy as the rule and polygamy as an exception, permissible under extraordinary circumstances. Islamic Jurist Imam abu Hanifah quotes that Prophet (s) said,

"A person who has one wife leads a happy, contented life, while a man with two wives falls prey to afflictions and tribulations." Generally, monogamy is the norm among Muslims across the world.

Therefore polygamy in Islam is not a rule, but an exception. It is a conditional permission, and not an article of faith or a matter of necessity. Many people are under the misconception that it is compulsory for a Muslim man to have more than one wife.

The above verse of the Quran were revealed after the battle of Uhud in which many Muslims were killed, leaving widows and orphans for whom due care was incumbent upon the Muslim survivors. Marriage was one way of protecting those widows and orphans.

With this background, it is apparent that Islam did not invent polygamy and that by introducing the said regulations; it does not encourage it as a rule. It did not abolish it because, if it were abolished, that would have been in theory only, and people would have continued the practice as it is observed today among other people whose constitutions and social standards do not approve polygamy. Islam came to be lived, to be practiced, and not to stay in suspense or be considered a mere theory. It is realistic and its outlook on life is most practical. And that is why it permits conditional and restricted polygamy; because, had it been in the best interest of humanity as whole to do without this institution, God would have certainly ordered its termination. But who knows better than God ?



Remarriage of widows and divorced women in Islam

There are a variety of reasons why Islam permits polygamy, remarriage of widows and divorced women. One does not have to imagine such reasons or make hypotheses. They are real and can be seen every-day, everywhere. Let us examine some of these reasons.

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: "*In general, the risk of death at any given age is less for females than for males.*"

Due to many social and political reasons, the number of widows and destitute will keep increasing to a considerable extent. The major reasons are: wars, accidents, natural calamities, and imprisonments.

In the First World War (1914 - 18), about 8 million soldiers were killed. Most of the civilian soldiers were also men.

In the Second World War (1939-45), about 60 million people were either killed or maimed for life, most of them men.

In the Iraq-Iran war alone (1979-1988), 82,000 Iranian women and about 100,000 Iraqi women were widowed, all in the space of ten years.

There is no country in which accidents do not take place every day on the streets. In India as per official report, a total of 3, 60,000 accidental deaths were reported during the year 2009. Among these males are 77% and Females are 23%.

Another drain on the availability of men in society is imprisonment. In the U.S., no less than 7, 22, 5800 people were convicted in 2009. A number of them – 97% of whom are men – are obliged to serve lengthy prison sentences. Male prisoners are usually more than women.

Some convicts will get long term imprisonment or death penalties. For a healthy society, a proper and humane solution is necessary, and it can only be achieved by providing the rights of womanhood. In this peculiar situation, Islam recommends dissolution of marriage. And in some severe punishments, the marriage dissolves by virtue of imprisonment of more than three years. Women affected in this way shall be allowed to select their new partner legally. Thus polygamy can rescue these women and solve this severe problem.

Now, if any society comes in this category, and if it were to forbid polygamy and restrict legal marriage to one wife only, what would widows and divorced women do? Where and how would they find the naturally desirable companionship? Where and how would they find sympathy, understanding, support and protection? The implications of the problem are not simply physical; they are also moral, social, emotional and natural. Every normal woman – whether she is in business or in Foreign Service or in the intelligence department – longs for a home, a family of her own. She needs someone to take care of and someone to care for her. Even if we look at it from a strictly physical point of view, the implications are still very serious, and we cannot just ignore them; otherwise, psychological complexes, nervous breakdowns, social disgust and mental instability would develop.

These natural desires and sentimental aspirations have to be realized. The need to belong, to care, and to be cared for, have to be satisfied somehow. Women in such a situation do not usually transform their nature or lead an angelic course of life. They feel that they have every right to enjoy life. If they cannot have it in a legal and decent way, they never fail to find other channels, although risky and temporary. Very few women can do without the permanent and assured companionship of men.

Any woman in this situation is bound to become a nervous wreck or a rebel and destroyer of morality.

In the past also too, when a women's husband died, she was given as inherited property to his brother and her step sons behaved with her cruelly. In Indian society, there was a tradition of immolation of the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. If she would live, she had to be away from worldly attraction and lead her whole life in mourning.

But Islam confined widows and divorced womens' mourning to four months and ten days which is called 'waiting period' or *Iddat*. After that, she is permitted all beautification. She can opt for remarriage now and the Quran gives sanction to it.

Marry those among you who are single. (Quran, 24 : 32)



The Consent of Women; the Islamic position

It is compulsory that the woman who is the object of the man's choice should be willing to enter into the married state. This willingness on the woman's part is a must before a marriage can be lawful in Islam. It is unlawful to marry a woman by force. There is no example in the history of Islam where a man has been allowed to force a woman into marriage.

Prophet Muhammad's (s) own view was that "an unmarried girl should not be married until her permission has been taken." "Abdullah (r), son of 'Abbas, one of the Prophet's (s) Companions and a commentator on the Quran, narrates the story of a girl who came to the Prophet (s) complaining that her father had married her off against her wishes. The Prophet (s) gave her the choice of either remaining within the bonds of wedlock or of freeing herself from them.

Another such incident narrated by Abdullah son of 'Abbas concerns a woman called Burairah and her husband, Mughith, who was a black slave. "Abdullah son of 'Abbas tells the story as if it were all happening before his very eyes: "Mughith is following Burairah through the paths of Medina.

He is crying and his tears are running down his beard. Seeing him, the Prophet (s) said to me, 'O 'Abbas are you not surprised at Mughith's love for Burairah and Burairah's hate for Mughith?' Then the Prophet (s) said to Burairah *'I wish you would take him back'* Burairah asked the Prophet (s) 'Is that a command from God?' The Prophet (s) replied, *'No, it is only a recommendation.'* Then, Burairah politely refused saying, 'I don't need this recommendation.'"

An interesting case of polygamy took place during the Caliphate of 'Umar (r). A certain widow, Umm Aban daughter of 'Uthbah, had four suitors for marriage. All four – 'Umar (r), Ali (r), Zubayr (r) and Talhah (r) – were already married. Umm Aban accepted the proposal of marriage made by Talhah (r) and, refused the other three, whereupon she was married to Talhah (r).

This happened in Medina, the capital of the Islamic State. Among the rejected suitors was the Umar (r) the ruler of Islamic State of Medina. But no one expressed surprise or dismay, because in Islam, a woman is completely free to make her own decisions. This is a right that no one can take away from her – not even the ruler of the day.

These incidents show that the Islamic commandments giving permission to marry up to four women does not mean having the right to seize four women and shut them up inside one's home. Marriage is a matter of mutual consent. Only that woman can be made a second or a third wife who is willing to be made a second or a third wife. And when this matter rests wholly on the willingness of the woman, there is no cause for objection.

The present age gives great importance to freedom of choice. This value is fully supported by Islamic law. On the other hand, the upholders of "feminism" want to turn freedom of choice into restriction of choice.

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Prophet Muhammad's (s) Multiple Marriages

Whenever the Prophet Muhammad's (s) name emerges, the image in many people's minds is of a man with many wives. Often it is stumbling block for non-Muslims to understand the personality of the Prophet (s), leading to irresponsible and premature conclusions, which are not to the credit of Islam or the Prophet (s). Here we shall present certain facts.

- The institution of marriage as such enjoys a very high status in Islam. It is commendable and essential for the sound survival of society.
- Prophet Muhammad (s) had never touched women until he was twenty-five years of age, when he married for the first time. He had won a reputation as the most truthful (*Al-Sadiq*) and faithful (*Al-Ameen*) man in Makkan society and was honored and respected as an honest and fair trader, and a loving and affectionate friend of all and protector of the poor, orphans and widows.
- Prophet Muhammad's (s) first marriage was to Khadijah (r), a forty year old widowed lady with high moral background

who was fifteen years senior to him. She herself initiated the contract, and he accepted the proposal in spite of her older age and in spite of her being widow. At that time, he could have quite easily found many prettier girls and much younger wives if he were passionate after things physical.

Prophet Muhammad (s) lived a happy and contented life with Khadijah (r) for about twenty five years and had all his children from her, except one. He never married another woman as long as she was alive. The intensity of his love for Khadijah (r) was shown when his friend, seeing his grief and sorrow after Khadijah's (r) death, asked him to remark; he said, *"Who can think of marriage after Khadijah (r)?"*

Khadijah Falls ill and Dies

The three year period of social boycott by fanatic Quraysh leaders, during which Prophet's (s) companions and his family remained almost shut away from the outer world, was a period of great suffering. The conditions to which they had been subjected, told upon the general health of the women and children. Khadijah (r), who had already been worn by the hardships in boycott by Quraysh, fell ill. It was some time in December, 619 A.D., that she left this world after a brief illness of three days. The Prophet (s) was very grieved and hurt at the loss of his most loving Companion.

He was harassed and persecuted by the fanatic Quraysh leaders, and his domestic life was also in a shambles. The children were young, and there was no one to look after them. Seeing his grief, his friends suggested to him that he should marry a widow who would look after his children and a virgin who would comfort him and love him to relieve his grief. Thus, he married Sauda (r) and Aishah (r) in the same year. These

marriages were initiated by his friends and then materialized to meet his need both of a guardian for his children and a companion for himself. There was nothing abnormal or sensuous about it. It was proposed to him to meet the existing need of the time and he accepted it.

● Prophet Muhammad's (s) second wife, Sauda (r), was also a widow. Along with her husband, she was one of Muhammad's (s) early followers and, on his advice, had migrated to Abyssinia. On their return, her husband died. She sought a shelter. The natural course for her was to turn to the Prophet (s) himself for whose Islamic mission her husband had died. The Prophet (s) extended his shelter and married her. Sauda (r) was past forty when the Prophet (s) took her as his wife to look after his young daughters. She had a son from her first husband but had no children by the Prophet (s).

● Prophet Muhammad's (s) third wife, Aishah (r), was the daughter of his closest Companion, Abu Bakr (r). One of the Prophet's (s) goals in this marriage was to strengthen the bond of his brotherhood with Abu Bakr (r), who was his main defender against the enemies. Secondly, Aishah (r) was of a lineage known for its honor and intelligence. Aishah's (r) age at the time of the marriage is disputed, but a recent analysis puts it at fifteen and not, as some has suggested, eleven.

The Prophet's (s) relationship with Aishah (r) was different from that with his other wives. It was more intellectual than sensuous. He was indulgent towards her because she loved to talk and argue with her husband, of whom she was an eager pupil. She took pride in the fact that most of the Quranic revelations in Medina came while she was with the Prophet, which she saw as a special favor from God. The Prophet (s) knew that she would tremendously benefit humanity by transmitting crucial knowledge from his life, especially about family and personal matters that others were not privy to.

Indeed, the Prophet (s) advised his community to learn half of the knowledge of the religion of Islam from Aishah (r). The foresight of the Prophet Muhammad (s) proved itself, for she would live for 45 years after his death, and thus became one of the main sources of Prophetic wisdom and knowledge.

She had handed over 2210 traditions (*Hadith*) of Prophet (s), to the community. She was a distinguished traditionalist and was often consulted on theological and judicial subjects.

- The Prophet (s) lived with the two wives Sauda (r), and Aishah (r) for five to six years, up to his fifty-sixth year of age, without taking any other wife.

- From his fifty-sixth year up to sixtieth year of his life, the Prophet Muhammad (s) contracted nine marriages in quick succession again for various reasons. In the last three years of his life he contracted no marriages.

- Prophet Muhammad's (s) fourth wife was Hafsa (r), the widowed daughter of Umar (r), who was one of his most trusted Companions. Her first husband died in the Battle of Badr. Umar (r) was extremely attached to his daughter, and he asked his friend Usman (r), to marry her, but he refused. He then asked Abu Bakr (r), but he also declined. Perhaps they had already heard of the quick temper of Hafsa (r). Finding Umar (r) in acute distress, the Prophet (s) took Hafsa (r) as his wife.

Hafsa (r) was temperamental and prone to fits of temper. This is recorded by her father, Umar (r). In the words of Umar (r): "Once my wife argued about a certain matter. I told her 'Who are you to advise me? She replied, 'You do not allow me to talk about a trifling matter but your daughter Hafsa (r) has sharp exchanges with the Prophet (s) on all sorts of matters.' I got up and went straight to Hafsa (r) and asked her: Is it true that you talk angrily with the Prophet (s).'" "Yes, I do, she replied. I said, 'I warn you against it; God will punish you.'"

● Prophet Muhammad's (s) fifth wife, Zaynab (r), daughter of Khuzaima, belonged to the very powerful tribe of Hawazin. She was another widow that the Prophet (s) married. She was sixty when the Prophet (s) married her. She was very generous and charitable, and fed the poor and the needy. She was known as the "Mother of the Downtrodden". She, however, passed away after three months of her marriage.

● Prophet Muhammad's (s) sixth wife, Ume Salamah (r), was a widow. She came from a distinguished family belonging to the Banu Firas tribe. One of the earliest converts to Islam, she did not accompany her husband to Medina because she was not allowed by the Quraysh to take her child with her. This was one of the forms of persecution which the enemies of the Prophet (s) resorted to. After some time she managed to escape, but, soon after her migration to Medina, her husband died, a martyr to the cause of Islam, leaving behind four orphans. Pregnant with another child, Ume Salamah (r) was heartbroken and distressed. The Prophet (s) sympathized with her lot and offered his hand in marriage. A self-respecting lady, Ume Salamah (r) hesitated at first, as she had children by her late husband. The Prophet (s) assured her that he would take care of them as his own. She was touched by his thoughtfulness and married him.

What purpose can there be for a person of fifty six to marry a widow with four orphans, except love, mercy and compassion? There was another crucial factor in this marriage: Ume Salamah (r) was from the Bani Makhzum the most powerful Makkan tribe, which was Islam's arch enemy at that time. Once again, bringing influential and powerful tribe closer to Islam was one of the noble objectives of the Prophet (s) in this marriage.

Ume Salamah (r) was a very pious lady. She fasted three days in a month and often spent the whole night in prayers. She

listened to the Prophet (s) with great respect and obeyed him implicitly.

● Prophet Muhammad's (s) seventh wife was Zaynab (r). She was a widow when she migrated to Medina and the Prophet (s) married her to his adopted son, Zayd (r), son of Harith. Zayd (r) divorced her; the Prophet (s) himself married Zaynab (r), who was then thirty-eight years old. This marriage irks most of Muhammad's (s) detractors, who criticize it as morally wrong on two grounds. First, it is argued that Zaynab (r), being the wife of the Prophet's (s) adopted son, was like a daughter to him. Second, it is claimed that Muhammad (s) manipulated her divorce so that he could marry her. However, a careful analysis will show that these criticisms are totally unfounded.

Zayd (r) came as a slave to the Prophet (s), who liberated him and declared him his adopted son. He was so fond of Zayd (r) that he even arranged his marriage with his cousin sister Zaynab (r), who was a grand-daughter of his uncle Abu Talib. Later, it so transpired that Zaynab (r) was not happy with her marriage to Zayd (r) because of the disparity in their social status.

The charge that the Prophet Muhammad (s) was responsible for the divorce is patently false or Concocted. Nothing could be further from the truth. Zaynab (r) was no stranger to Muhammad (s); she was his cousin and he had known her since childhood. It was because of the loss of her first husband that Prophet (s) was keen to rehabilitate her. Had he been so attracted by her beauty, he would not have arranged her marriage with Zayd (r). Zaynab (r) was indeed not happy with Zayd (r): she resented the fact that she was married to a slave, and looked down upon him and treated him shabbily. Zayd (r) often complained to the Prophet (s) about her behavior but the Prophet (s) always cautioned patience. So incensed was Zayd (r) with her overbearing manner that one day in a fit of temper, he divorced her.

In the meantime God revealed:

Muhammad is not the (physical and real) father of any man among you. But he is the messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets. And God knows all things. (Quran, 33 : 40)

Zaynab's (r) relatives pressed the Prophet (s) to marry her. The Prophet (s) did not agree, saying it was unthinkable for him to do so. She was the wife of his son, he said, for among the pagans an adopted son was equal to a natural son. It was then that a revelation of Quran came, clarifying the position that an adopted son cannot be a son: filial affiliation has to be natural. Muhammad (s) was thus given permission by God to marry Zaynab (r). His marriage to Zaynab (r) was aimed at emphasizing the invalidity of the age-old Arab practice of taking adopted sons as real sons. The marriage was divinely sanctioned, as stated in the Quran,

When Zayd had come to the end of his union with her, We gave her to you in marriage ... (Quran, 33 : 37)

Then Zaynab (r) prostrated and prayed: "O Lord, if I am worthy of him, give me in marriage to him." It is reported that, then the above verse was revealed and the Prophet (s) sent a message to Zaynab (r) that she was given to him in marriage by his Lord. When she heard this news, she took off all her jewelry and gave it to the slave-girl, Salamah, who had brought the good news, fell prostrate and vowed to fast for two months.

Prophet Muhammad (s) gave a grand reception feast on his marriage with Zaynab (r). About 300 Honorable companions and their families enjoyed this feast. The verses of Quran on *Hijab* or Veil were revealed on this occasion as some people stayed unnecessarily late in Prophet's (s) house, which caused him and his household great inconvenience for there was only one room. The Quran mentions this in these words:

O! You who believe! Enter not the house of the Prophet (s) for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted to you. But if you are invited, enter, and when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation. Surely that would cause annoyance to the Prophet, and he would be shy of asking you to go; but God is not shy of the Truth. And when you ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain. That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts. (Quran, 33 : 53)

Prophet Muhammad's (s) eighth wife Juwairiya (r) was daughter of Harith, the chief of the powerful tribe of Banu taliq. She was married to a scion of the same tribe, and her father and husband were chronic enemies of the prophet (s). Juwairiya (r) was a prisoner of war from the battle. Harith went, rather hesitantly, to Muhammad (s) and told him: 'Muhammad it does not behave me, as one of the chiefs of my people, that my daughter should become a maidservant. I beseech you, therefore, to release her. I am prepared to pay the ransom amount. The Prophet (s) said, "Will it not be better if the decision is left to Juwairiya?" Harith told his daughter Juwairiya that Muhammad (s) had left everything to her; therefore she would not disgrace him. She said that she would like to stay in the service of Muhammad (s). 'The best course then will be for the Prophet (s) to marry me.' replied Juwairiya. Harith was pleased with her reply and paid the release money instantly. The Prophet (s) then took her as his wife.

The marriage created a reservoir of goodwill among the Muslims for her tribe, and all the other prisoners of war were set free. Again, this marriage led to the establishment of peace and friendly relations. Aishah (r) grew very fond of Juwairiya (r) and helped her to learn the basics of Islam. She was a quick learner and she soon became a great devotee of the new faith.

Of her personality, Aishah (r) said, 'She exudes charms which no one can resist.'

● Ume Habibah (r) was the ninth wife of Prophet Muhammad (s). She was a daughter of Islam's chronic enemy Abu Sufyan, the leader of the pagans of Makkah, and his wife, the fiery Hind. Ume Habibah (r) and her husband had embraced Islam in defiance of the wishes of her parents. To escape harassment by them, the couple migrated to Abyssinia. There, her husband became a Christian, but Ume Habibah (r) refused to give up Islam. In the course of time, the husband began leading a life of ease and pleasure; he took to heavy drinking, which resulted in his death. On her return to Makkah, the Prophet (s) felt sorry for Ume Habibah's (r) plight and married her. Like many of his marriages, his marriage to Ume Habibah (r) resulted in winning the hearts of many members of her family, and bringing a major tribe of the Quraysh, the Banu Abd al-Shams, towards Islam. The Prophet's (s) marriage with Ume Habibah had far-reaching effects. The conversion of Khalid (r) was due to this marriage. The opposition of Abu Sufyan to the Prophet (s) was greatly damped by this marriage. The Quraysh now began to realize that Prophet Muhammad (s) was not their enemy but was one who always wished them well and therefore it was a folly to fight such an honorable kinsman. At the time of their marriage, Ume Habibah (r) was thirty-eight, and she dedicated every moment of her life to Prophet's (s) service. She outlived him by more than two decades and died at the age of seventy-three, she had two sons from her first husband; she had no children from the Prophet (s).

● Prophet Muhammad's (s) tenth wife was Safiyyah (r), who was taken as a prisoner of war in the Battle of Khaybar. Her father and mother were Jews belonging to the two leading Jewish families. Safiyyah (r) was married to a well-known Jewish poet bin Mishkam. But they could not get along, and so her husband divorced her. Safiyyah (r) married again, this time to a

Jewish warrior of great repute. She lost him, too, when he was killed in the Battle of Khyber, along with Safiyyah's (r) father and the other male members of her family. Safiyyah (r) was taken as a prisoner of war and became the maid of one of the Companions. Other Companions objected to this on the ground that she was the daughter of one of the tribal chiefs and, therefore, she could only be assigned to the Prophet (s). Safiyyah (r) also expressed her desire to become a Muslim and marry the chief of the Muslims. That alone, she said, would help restore her dignity and status among her people.

The Prophet (s) saw a green mark on the face of Safiyyah (r), near her eye and enquired, "What is this?" she replied, "One day I saw in a dream that a moon rose from Medina and fell in my lap. I mentioned this dream to my husband, Kananah. He said, 'Do you want to be married to the king who comes from Medina?' Then, he slapped me on the face and left this mark."

Safiyyah (r) was mostly favorably impressed by the majestic personality of Prophet Muhammad (s), his truthfulness, his kindly behavior and the truth of his mission. She accepted Islam. She loved its ideal humanitarianism. She became a devout believer. She punctually performed all the rituals and revered the Islamic traditions with full sincerity. She was proud of having accepted Islam.

Once, during the Prophet's (s) lifetime, Umar (r) asked Safiyyah (r), whether she still maintained her Jewish links. 'I observe Friday and not Saturday, Safiyyah (r) told him bluntly, 'but I continue to have affection for my Jewish kith and kin. Islam does not prohibit that.' Umar (r) was speechless. She had no children and died at the age of sixty.

- Maria (r) was presented to the Prophet (s) as a slave by the Archbishop of Alexandria, and the Prophet (s) subsequently married her. It would have been an act of discourtesy on Prophet's (s) part to have kept her as a slave. After Khadijah (r),

Maria (r) was the only other wife who bore him a child, a son named Ibrahim, who died within two years of his birth. Maria (r) could not bear the loss, and died a few years later.

● The Prophet Muhammad's (s) final marriage was to another divorced woman, Maymuna (r). She was married twice and was very old. She married the Prophet (s) when he was fifty-seven. The reason for her marriage was that the Prophet's (s) uncle, Abbas (r), suggested it in order to bring her tribe – Halaliyyeen – to the fold of Islam. That was actually what happened; after his marriage to her, they entered Islam in hosts.

● From the above, we see that it was not the Prophet Muhammad's (s) whims and desires that initiated his marriages, but, rather, it was that God had planned his marriages. He commanded His Messenger after the last marriage (with Maymuna) "*not to marry anymore.*" (Quran 33:52), because by that time the objectives of his marriages were achieved as the Prophetic mission was near completion.

● Most of these women were around forty or fifty and were thus past their prime when Muhammad (s) married them; none of them were particularly known for physical charms or beauty, they had been divorced or widowed, and most of them had children from their previous husbands. All of them sought his hand and shelter or were presented to him as gifts but he took them as legal wives. Except Khadijah (r) and Maria (r), none of the wives bore Muhammad (s) any children.

These facts conclusively establish that the marriages of the Prophet (s) were contracted for social or political purposes or on humanitarian grounds to further the cause which was closest to his heart.

● This is the general background of the Prophet Muhammad's (s) marriages, they clearly indicates that these marriages were not in response to physical needs or biological

pressures. It is inconceivable to think that he maintained a number of wives because of personal desires or physical wants. Anyone, a friend or a foe, who doubts the moral integrity or the spiritual excellence of Prophet Muhammad (s) on account of his marriages, has to find satisfactory explanations to questions like these: Why did he first marry at the age of twenty-five after having had no association with any female? Why did he choose an older widow who was fifteen years senior to him? Why did he remain with her until her death, when he was over fifty? Why did he accept all those helpless widows and divorcees who possessed no particular appealing qualities? Why did he lead such an austere and hard life, when he could have had an easy and comfortable course? Why did he contract most of his marriages in the busiest five years in his life, when his Islamic mission and career were at stake? How could he manage to be what he was, if the harem life or passions had allegedly overwhelmed him? As some critics might contend. There are many other points that can be raised. The matter is not so simple as to interpreted in terms of desire for women. It calls for a serious and honest consideration.

● It would be relevant here to quote the well known Western scholar, Karen Armstrong, the author of *Muhammad: a Prophet for our time*, who, with regard to the issue of Prophet's (s) marriages and polygamy in Islam writes: "The Quranic institution of polygamy was a piece of social legislation. It was designed not to gratify the male sexual appetite, but to correct the injustices done to widows, orphans, and other female dependents, who were especially vulnerable. All too often, unscrupulous people seized everything and left the weaker members of the family with nothing... Polygamy was designed to ensure that unprotected women would be decently married, and to abolish the old loose, irresponsible liaisons; men could have only four wives and must treat them equitably; it was an unjustifiably wicked act to devour their property... The Quran

was attempting to give women a legal status that most Western women would not enjoy until the nineteenth century. The emancipation of women was a project dear to the Prophet's (s) heart..."

Reasons for the Multiple Marriages

It is pity that some of his enemies and critics argue that Prophet Muhammad's (s) multiple marriages were entered into for his sexual gratification and pass judgment on him without seriously studying the nature and scope of his mission and the nature and quality of the life that he lived before marriage, then after marriage at Makkah and later at Medina.

At Medina, the Prophet (s) married more wives for various reasons and considerations, including personal, tribal, and political. He was fifty five years old when he began to expand his household and they were all widows of one kind or another and over the age of thirty six year, except two. Could anyone believe that he started womanizing when he was in his mid-fifties and engaged in a most terrible and fierce struggle for survival? He was surrounded by enemies from all directions and from inside was being threatened by the hypocrites and the Jews. The Quraysh were organizing a series of raids and invading the city of Medina and the surrounding hostile tribes were a constant danger to the security of Medina. It was difficult to sleep peacefully during the nights. How could anyone, not to speak of the noble person Muhammad (s), indulge in sensuous and pleasure-seeking acts in such a situation? These are all insinuation of evil-minded people who see everything and judge every person according to their own base feelings and desires. As the evil is in them, they see every other person in the same light.

Prophet Muhammad (s) lived a most simple, humble, and modest life, his furniture consisted of mats, jugs, blankets and such simple things. During the day he was the busiest man of his era as he was president and sovereign of the Arabian Peninsula, Chief Justice, Commander-in-Chief, Instructor, etc., all in one. At night he was the most devoted man. Quran says:

"He used to stay one to two-third of every night vigilant in prayers and meditation..." (Quran, 73:20)

In the last years of his life wealth was pouring into Medina from all destinations. Most of his wives had come from very noble and wealthy families of Arabia and had lived in luxury and ease in their parents' homes. But in the household of the Prophet (s), even the necessities of life, not to speak of comforts and luxury, were hardly available. The Prophet (s) often spent days in hunger and fasting and the provision for his wives was hardly satisfactory. Now, seeing a huge flow of wealth coming to Medina and being distributed among the people but very little, or nothing, given to them, they began to demand a greater share from the Prophet (s) for meeting their daily needs. In this regard the Quran says:

"O Prophet! Say to your wives, "If it be that you desire the life of this world, and its glitter, then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner."

At this, they were given the choice of staying with Muhammad (s) they had to accept a life of humility and poverty, or taking whatever they wished in which case of wealth and departing. They all willingly and whole heartedly accepted his company in poverty. Do the critics really believe that a sensuous pleasure-seeker shows this quality of character and conduct? Such people should first look into their own lives and see where they stand and then try to understand the nature and lifestyle of the Prophet (s) and then pass judgment on the basis of the

concrete facts of history.

● In the battle of Uhud, many Muslim soldiers were killed, leaving widows and orphans for whom due care was incumbent upon the Muslim survivors. Marriage was one way of protecting these widows and orphans. The Prophet (s) and his Companions could not have admitted them in their homes without the tie of marriage. In this way, the Prophet (s) had also married helpless, destitute widowed women.

● There were many war prisoners captured by the Muslims and they were entitled to security and protection. They were not killed or denied any rights, human or physical. On the contrary, they were helped to settle down through legal marriages. Prophet Muhammad (s) and of his Companions was to offer protection to these innumerable widows and female prisoners or captives of war and thus he helped their children from starvation and ruin.

Had these captive widows and women been let loose free and unrestrained, the whole atmosphere would have been spoiled with corrupt practices. In this way the society was protected from corruption. The Prophet (s) and his Companions did not keep these women in their harem without the tie of marriage. Can anybody suggest a better remedy for widow and orphans? The Quran pre-supposed this thing and therefore said, regarding the object of these marriages; *"In order that no blame may attach you."*

● Another reason for the Prophet's (s) marriages was to ensure the preservation of his deeds and sayings for the guidance of human society. The Prophet (s) was sent as a World Teacher by God and, as such, his actions and deeds his were guided by God.

Half of humanity consisted of women to whom this message of Islam had to be conveyed effectively and faithfully.

The Prophet (s) was delivering his message and teachings to the men every day through his practical example and through his teaching. It was absolutely necessary that a team of sincere, faithful and dedicated women should be prepared to convey this Message to other women. For this purpose, the only logical, practical and effective way was to expand the household of the Prophet (s). They would be very close to the Prophet (s), enjoying his intimacy as well as listening to his words of advice and watching his practice from close quarters. This regular training and education of the Prophet's (s) household from the source of light was a great factor in preserving knowledge of details of very delicate, confidential and personal problems of women, which otherwise would not have been known to the humanity. They very faithfully transferred the treasures of knowledge of Islam and the practice of its Prophet (s), as they saw it and themselves practiced it together with the Messenger of God.

● Yet another reason for some of these marriages was to,

(a) Encourage inter tribal, (Inter-caste) marriages.

(b) The Importance of re-marriage of widows.

(c) And of re-marriage of divorced women.

(a) Taking up the first point, we see what a great mischief is done to society by the ban of inter caste marriage. In order to give a practical lesson to mankind the Prophet (s) removed all distinctions between tribes on account of birth and parentage. Safiyyah (r) was a Jewish lady. By taking her as wife, the Prophet (s) showed that a Muslim can marry any woman, who was previously of a different religion and different nationality, provided no partner is set up with God in worship. Such also was the marriage with Maria.

(b) Widow Remarriage was, till very recently a great problem, especially in India and in the pre-Islamic world. The Prophet (s) allowed such remarriage and himself set an example by taking in marriage several widows except the virgin Aishah (r) and the divorced Zaynab (r).

(c) Pre-Islamic Arabs refrained from marrying a divorced woman. To teach them, otherwise the Prophet (s) married Zaynab (r), who was divorced by the liberated slave Zayd.

● A cursory glance at the marriage relationships of the Prophet Muhammad (s) will show their political significance. It was through these relationships that the different tribes were closely linked up with the Prophet (s). Geographically, these tribes were spread all over the Arabian Peninsula and strengthened the position of the Prophet through tribal links. This helped in lessening tribal opposition, resisting ambitions and even suppressing family feuds. It also helped to establish universal peace and justice in the Arabian Peninsula.

● Some of the Prophet Muhammad's (s) marriages were for legislative reasons and to abolish certain corrupt traditions. Such was his marriage to Zaynab (r), which indicates that divorcees could remarry. Zayd (r) was adopted by Muhammad (s) and called his son as was the custom among the Arabs before Islam. But Islam abrogated this custom. Muhammad (s) was the first man to express this disapproval in a practical way. So, he married the divorcee of his "adopted" son to show that adaptation does not really make the adopting child a real son of the adopting father and also to show that marriage is lawful for divorcees. Incidentally, Zaynab (r) was Muhammad's (s) cousin, and had been offered to him for marriage before she was taken by Zayd (r). He refused her then, but after she was divorced he accepted her, for two legislative purposes: the lawful marriage

of divorcees and clarifying the real status of adopted children. The story of this Zaynab (r) has been associated in some minds with ridiculous fabrications as regards the moral integrity of Prophet Muhammad (s). These ferocious, vicious fabrications of the enemies and critics of Prophet (s) are not worth considering here. (Pl ref. Quran, 33:36-38)

● These are the circumstances surrounding the Prophet Muhammad's (s) marriages. For the objective observers, there is no doubt whatsoever that Muhammad (s) had the highest standards of morality and was the perfect model for man under all circumstances. We appeal for a serious discussion of the matter, to reach sound conclusions.

The Prophet Muhammad's (s) multiple marriages have to be viewed in the light of the circumstances and the requirements of the times in which he lived.



Status of Women

Modesty and *Hijab*

Women in the pre-Islam Arabia were treated with contempt and were considered sub-humans. Rarely did they get share in property or were free to exercise their own will in matters of marriage, management of property or had any participation in political affairs. Rich men could have any number of wives or concubines. Women were treated as chattel and there was no respect for their self-identity as human beings on par with men. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) initiated the social reforms in conformity with the Quranic commandment declaring the men and women to be equal with either of them having a little more than equal rights in certain aspects.

Prophet Muhammad (s) set about changing the societal norms by laying down the perimeters of a nuclear family. The Quran laid down an elaborate series of dos and don'ts with regard to the family system. It envisioned a society which was based on the nucleus of a family rather than a tribe as was the case till then. It was for the first time that people were asked to define and determine their mutual ties on the basis of male versus female relationship. Thus women were made the main pivot of the network of kinship. The ties were then to be decided on

the basis of : 1- Which womb bore them, 2- With whom they were married to, and 3- Who nursed them during their infancy.

Prophet Muhammad (s) struck at the roots of several customs that downgraded the women's status. Even slave women with whom one had marital, conjugal relationship were prohibited from being handed down to sons after death and were ordered to be treated on par with mothers. Shares in inheritance were fixed for women of all category. The Quran also designated the relatives who were barred for marital ties in order to secure the family within firm boundaries. It also laid down norms for interaction between unrelated men and women, prescribed hours during which people were to especially care for privacy of homes and manner of announcing the entry into family homes.

Prophet Muhammad (s) elevated the status and stature of women through a series of initiatives. Mother's status was sanctified by lending primacy to obedience towards mother over obedience towards fathers. In Prophet's words, the heaven lay beneath the mother's feet. Arabs who grieved at the birth of the girl-child, and were not averse to burying them after the birth were given the glad tidings of paradise if they could nurture them with love and affection and brought them up to the stage of marriage. Remarriage of widows, war widows, and marriage with orphaned girls was encouraged. Much against the common accusation that Islam promotes polygamy, the Quran restricted it from unlimited number of wives to merely four, a progressive step in those times when rich men went on a marriage spree and extravaganza.

Institution of marriage received all-round support in the society while anything that wrecked marital and spousal ties were frowned upon. Yet Islam lent due recognition to the possibility of friction, differences between spouses and did not rule out the possibility of break-ups and provided for honourable

dissolution of marriages. The whole idea was to build a unified, interconnected and organized social bonds and striking a balance between man and women.

HIJAB

Veil

In order to safeguard the chastity and honour of women and to nurture a pious society, it was decreed that women should don loose garments which are today variously termed as *khimar*, *purdah*, *chador*, *burqa*, *abaya* (A long outer garment, worn by women in Arab countries.) and headscarves in various parts of the world.

Tell the believing women to cast their gaze down and guard their modesty, and not to display their beauty and their adornments except what that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and that they must not display their beauty except to their husbands' their fathers, their husbands fathers, their sons, . . . (Quran, 24 : 31)

Both men and women were advised to be modest in their behavior, keep their gazes down and avoid temptation. People tend to view Islamic concept of *hijab* as anti-women and the biased media deliberately avoids focusing on verses of the Quran that ask men to be modest, for example:

Say to the believing men to cast their gaze down and guard their modesty; that is purer for them; verily God is all-aware of what they do.

(Quran, 24 : 30)

Prophet Muhammad (s) encouraged all measures that

nurtured bonds of love and trust between spouses and discouraged lust and lewd behavior between the unrelated ones.

The benefits of *hijab*, loose garments and modest dress are not far to seek. Even today the women who do not display the contours of their body by wearing skin-tight or revealing dresses are treated with respect. Contrarily, the ones who act in films, dance, dare to bare, and commodified through advertisements, become the objects of lust. The multi-billion dollar industry manufacturing cosmetics, soaps, shampoos, lingerie, vanity bags, garments, and even items as personal as sanitary napkins and contraceptive pills and devices thrive by promoting female obscenity. The western preference for scantily dressed females and well-suited males speaks volumes about the anti-women bias when it comes to cashing upon physical charm. The Western breast-beating over suppression of Muslim women and measures such as ban on veil and *burqa* becomes plain in this context. Naturally, an \$8 billion industry making cosmetics stands to lose if women begin to reserve their charm only for their husbands rather than for social audiences or celluloid screens. No wonder then why the West feels perturbed at the constant exodus of women to the fold of Islam where their femininity finds security from prying eyes or glare of the media. If Lauren Booth, sister of Tony Blair's wife, Maryam Jameela (formerly Margret Marquis), British journalist Yvonne Ridley, or Malayalam poet Kamala Suraiya find solace in Islam, it should, for sure, leave some scope for West and the Western feminists to ponder why the 'outdated, orthodox, antiquated Islam' is making forays into the hearts of so many 'liberated' women. They need to question "Are not the fashion parades organized by the garment and Cosmetic industry at such huge cost promoting dresslessness? They also need to question if they have not bargained for disintegration of the family and individual peace by giving free reign to the march of lust ?

Hijab Pinnacle of Intellect and Sophistication

Perhaps no one more aptly summed up the respect and honour women enjoyed within the fold of Islam than Yemeni woman activist and 2011 Nobel Laureate Tawakkol Karmen. She surprised the International print and electronic media by appearing dressed in Abaya and headscarf at the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony at City Hall in Norwegian capital Oslo. They asked her: "Doesn't she feel her mode of dressing as something which contradicts her education and intellectual level as the *hijab* is viewed as oppression of women and backwardness?" Tawakkol replied: "The human being in early times was almost naked. With the development of his thought over time he began to wear clothes. What I am today and what I wear is the height of intellect and sophistication reached by man through the ages, not backwardness. Nakedness is a sign of backwardness and human thinking going back to early times."

26

MEDINA

A Model City

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) being the first to set up a state in Medina, did not inherit a well-established system of governance. He was basically reforming a society that was divided into countless tribes and led their lives according to the tribal laws and customs. There were no institutions of governance like the judiciary, army, treasury, education, and general administration for the simple reason that none existed before. He had to start from the scratch. In a society that had not experienced organization and administration, Prophet Muhammad (s) pioneered the process of social organization. No sector of life and development was left untouched by him. It was no small task to lay down rules and norms, discard the old customs and make the Medina populace comply to the new set of rules. He envisioned state of Medina to be the guiding light for the people enveloped in darkness in the entire Arabian Peninsula for over two millennia. Even a cursory look at the reforms he initiated nearly 1,500 years ago would suggest that he was much ahead of his times. He laid down a system that became the corner stone for the fully blossomed Islamic civilization in the then Middle East.

The first among the institutions he set up was *Masjid-e-Nabawi* or what is called as the Prophet's Mosque. It was the pivot of all activity in the city. Prophet Muhammad (s) had his house attached with the mosque. Besides serving as the place for congregational prayers, it also began to act as the community centre. It was the seat of the governance, a centre for learning, a place for occasional medical treatment and nursing, a rehabilitation centre, a welfare centre and the place for some legitimate recreational activities. Being the hub of new city that was emerging around, it provided easy access to all and sundry. Being the first such public facility where people speaking a variety of languages and diverse tastes and colour could meet, Prophet's Mosque, *Masjid-e-Nabawi* promoted social integration. Delegations descending from far off destinations would descend in the vicinity of the mosque. People who needed help and the ones who could offer such help, would go nowhere other than coming to the mosque.

First Written Constitution of State in History

After his migration to Medina, Prophet Muhammad (s) laid the foundation of a city-state and promulgated a state Constitution. This represents the first written Constitution of a state in history. It contains details of the rights and duties of all citizens of the Islamic state, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, and pagan Arabs.

First University of Islam

The Prophet (s) was particularly conscious of creating mass literacy. Suffa, a rectangular platform erected for the purpose of new emigrants, who had none by the way of family to look after their needs, were provided shelter here. These emigrants would serve different purposes. The Prophet asked those among

them who were literate, to impart literacy to general folk in Medina. Some others who had scholarly disposition would be engaged in communicating the precepts and practices of Islam to the new entrants to the fold of Islam. Yet others would be dispatched to hamlets of tribes who were accepting Islam on a daily basis and demanded instruction in their new faith.

Suffah was a school by day and a hostel by night for the swelling ranks of neo-Muslims. In essence, it was the first residential university of Islam. Maaz (r) son of Jabal, an eminent companion, was appointed the chief mentor. Maaz was one who had dedicated his entire life, energy and resources for the sake of Islam and had to sell even his house to pay off his debts.

Soon after the founding of Al-Suffah, other schools were established. Islamic Scholar, Baladhuri, has stated that part from Al-Suffah, there were nine schools attached to mosques in different locations in Medina city.

The Prophet (s) also sent his distinguished Companions as teachers outside Medina to areas where people were increasingly accepting Islam and demanded instruction in their new faith. When Amr (r), son of Hazm was appointed as governor of Yemen; his official duties included not only administration, but also teaching.

Secretariat

Historians and biographers of Prophet Muhammad (s) have recorded the names of fifty Companions who served as his scribes at different points of time. Some of them were entrusted with transcribing the Quranic revelations, while others wrote official letters to emperors and governors on behalf of the Prophet (s). Some of the scribes kept accounts of Zakat and other state revenues.

Official Seal and letters

Nearly 400 documents, treaties, charters, instructions to officials and census records have been preserved, and also Prophet (s) sent letters to kings, foreign rulers and governors, inviting them to Islam have been preserved.

In dictating letters, Prophet (s) asked his secretary, to begin with the name of Almighty Allah and put the names of the sender and of the addressee, the text then followed and the official seal was affixed at the end.

In order to authenticate the credentials of his Prophethood, a silver seal was made in which were engraved the words, "*Muhammad' the Messenger of God.*"

Secretaries and Learning of Foreign Languages

Abdullah (r), son of Umar was the holy Prophet's special secretary, the highly intelligent young Anas (r) was his secretary and Zaid, son of Thabit was Prophet's chief secretary. Zaid was extraordinarily intelligent. The Prophet advised him to learn Hebrew language which he did in record time. The Prophet needed his skill in order to dictate letters that could be translated into Hebrew. He rarely ever trusted anyone else knowing Hebrew. Zaid learnt Hebrew and developed a rare command over it. Thus the Prophet had a trusted lieutenant to carry out his secretarial work in Hebrew. The Prophet then asked Zaid to learn Syriac and Zaid was not found wanting even there. He developed mastery even over the Syriac.

Zaid's astounding memory and the capacity to quote verses of the Quran verbatim with impeccable delivery was also

instrumental in his appointment, primarily, as the ready reckoner of the Quran and still later as the 'Writer of the divine revelation (*Kaatib e Wahi*).

During his period itself Prophet Muhammad (s) formed a committee to compile Quran, and nominated Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman, Ali, as members, and appointed Zaid as a Chairman of the committee.

Demography or Census

Interestingly, soon after arrival in Medina, Prophet Muhammad (s) ordered that a census of the population of the city be undertaken. In all, 10,000 people, including 500 Muslims, were enumerated.

Before the advent of Islam in Medina, the Jews considered the counting or study of human population as a sin and interference in God's will.

Town Planning

Prophet Muhammad (s) introduced a system of municipal administration in Medina. It was named *Baladia*, a derivative of *Balad* (city) in Arabic. *Baladia* was to look after the maintenance of the city.

Four Lane Road

One of his first measures was to instruct the people to lay down gutters at the rear side lanes of the houses to let out used water and sewage. In the new town developing around the Prophet's Mosque, Prophet Muhammad (s) designated lanes and thoroughfares with specific measurements between the houses and advised the people to keep them clean. Islamic scholar

Muhammad Hameedullah writes that the Prophet (s) introduced by-lanes and designed roads in such a manner that two camels loaded with goods can walk abreast on each side of the road, a precursor of today's four-lane thoroughfares. He also advised planting shady trees on the margins to facilitate travelers.

Housing

Taking a long-term view of the future importance of the Prophet's Mosque *Masjid-e-Nabawi*, Prophet Muhammad (s) involved himself in allotting many dwellings to specific families and purposes. He also ordered building of walls around family homes in order to maintain privacy and to have proper ventilation.

In keeping with the Islam's preference for nuclear family comprising husband, wife and children living together, Prophet Muhammad (s) encouraged people to provide separate quarter for the newly married couples in order to promote nuclear family. Prophet discouraged joint family system so that a family grew around a couple and each of them could have a residence of his own and nurture the bonds with love and affection in the privacy of their homes unhindered by the prying eyes of others. A *hadith* from the Prophet speaks of his preference for a separate home and an animal for riding for each of the families and termed them the tools of bliss for a family.

Water Supply

There was no concept of public water supply then. On his arrival in Medina, he found that there was only a single well of soft water. It was called 'the well of Roma'. The Prophet (s) announced that any person who would purchase the well and endow it for the mankind, will have a better reward in lieu of it in Paradise. His companion Usman (r) purchased the well and dedicated it for public use.

When one of his companions Saad, son of Ibada lost his mother, he wanted to make an offering on her behalf. When he enquired with the Prophet as to what could be the best choice in this regard, the Prophet asked him arrange digging of a well and dedicate it for public use. Saad did accordingly and was blessed by the Prophet.

Protection of Water Sources

Concepts like ecology and environment were not in vogue then. All that the people understood was that greenery and shady trees were essential for human subsistence and nurturing of cattle. The Prophet (s) set up two kinds of inviolate zone where no trees would be cut and wildlife would not be disturbed. These were *haram* and *hima*. They were set up around towns and watercourses. The *haram* zones were established around wells within towns and cities. Around wells, some area would be left vacant to provide room for their operation and maintenance, safeguard their water from pollution and resting area for livestock. Care was taken to ensure that outwash should not flow back into the wells.

Green Belts around Medina

Yet another initiative by Prophet Muhammad (s) in preserving the environment was creation of green areas on the fringes of the town which were called *hima*. These were zones where trees would be planted and no hunting of animals was allowed. One of such zones, known as *Hima Al-Naqee* was ordered to be set up in the valley of Aqeeq, 20 miles out of Medina. This was designated as the grazing ground for horses. Muhammad (s) organized planting of trees in large numbers. Soon the area became so green that it was difficult to spot a horse rider passing through it. He designated its boundaries by asking a person to call from a tree top. The place where his voice could not be heard was marked as its outer limit. No trees would be allowed

to cut in the area.

Once Prophet Muhammad (s) returned from the Valley of Aqeeq and described its beauty and serenity to his beloved wife Ayesha (r). Moved with the description, Ayesha (r) suggested that the Prophet (s) moved his residence to the Aqeeq. Several rich people from Medina later built their summer homes near the place. Soon the place turned into a resort for the citizens of Medina and families began to go there for the purpose of recreation.

Conservation of Heritage

The conservation of both architectural and natural heritage too was a dominant concern in Prophet's (s) planning of Medina. He advised people not to tear down the old forts and walls while reconstructing their homes. They were asked to incorporate them as much as possible in designs of their new dwellings. He likewise advised people not to cut trees. Chronicler Baihaqi has quoted the Prophet's action in this regard wherein the Prophet (s) is said to have described these old monument and trees as elements that enhance the aesthetic beauty of Medina. He would ask people to plant trees around and within their houses. A hadith informs us that he wanted the believers to plant a date tree sapling in their hand even if they see the Day of Judgment approaching. It only shows the importance the Prophet attached to planting of trees and doing it even when one is not sure of benefitting from its full growth into a tree.

Guesthouses

As Medina emerged as an centre of power it gained immense importance as a centre of governance, administration, legislation, trade and commerce and learning. The city lay in the middle of the then important thoroughfare connecting Syria and Palestine in the north to Yemèn via Makkah in the south. Travellers would halt there for collecting food, fodder for

animals and exchange of merchandise. Prophet Muhammad (s) ordered setting up *serais* (inns) for them where a number of services would equip them for travel ahead. Delegations from distant destinations began to visit the Prophet for nurturing of contacts with the new state. In the beginning they were hosted in private homes or quarters attached to the Prophet's Mosque, *Masjid-e-Nabawi*. As Islam began to conquer newer areas, a constant stream of neo-converts would head for Medina on a regular basis. Historian Nooruddin Samhoudi writes that Abdur Rahman bin Auf, an immigrant from Makkah and a wealthy businessman, set aside one of the large houses he owned for the stay of the guests and their hospitality. At one time 200 such delegations were reported to be staying in Medina. Several large houses were hired to accommodate them.

Establishment of Hospitals

Before the advent of Islam, the Arabs practised self-medication. Public medical care system was not there. As the result of inducement to public service, hospitals were established.

One companion of the Prophet (s), called Rafida (r), had pitched a tent adjacent to the Prophet's Mosque to nurse wounded soldiers. When Sa'ad (r), son of Ma'az got wounded in the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet (s) asked him to be nursed in the tent of Rafida (r) so that he could visit him often. Islam has played an historical role in conducting medical camps and the establishment of permanent hospitals.

Two women companions, Ume Sulaym and Nusybah carried water and first-aid to wounded soldiers, thus they are the first nurses in Islamic history.

Treatment by Specialists

We have some information about the position of physicians and surgeons in the Prophetic era. A companion fell ill; the Prophet (s) went to enquire about his health. He asked whether a physician was available in the locality. Two names were mentioned. The Prophet (s) advised that the better of the two, an expert, should be sent for.

The incident underlines the fact that the Prophet (s) was conscious in knowledge and advocated treatment by specialists.

Similar traditions on the subject suggest that the importance of medicine was fully realized during the period of the Prophet (s). Many a prescription is attributed to the Prophet (s) who used to suggest simple remedies to people who complained to him of some ailment. A whole science of medicine has emerged from the practice and precepts of the Prophet (s).

Medina Market

Prophet Muhammad (s) had developed a regulated market in Medina which was popularly known as 'Aswaq'. This market was on the northwest side of the Prophet's Mosque, not too far from it. The market was approximately five hundred meters long and more than one hundred meters wide. It was in fact bigger than what was needed at that juncture. It was yet another manifestation of Prophet Muhammad's visionary disposition, as Medina was expanding at a fast pace in almost every regard, and the surrounding tribes and communities were increasingly spawning their interest to be on familiar terms with what was then considered as a rising wonder.

Sin, unlawful and Ban

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was assigned the task of guiding and reforming humanity spread across the entire globe. This included reforming both aspects of life, spiritual as well as physical. And he was told to carry out the task in accordance with the divine guidance conferred upon him in the form of the Quran. The teachings of the Quran and Muhammad (s) transcended the barriers of both, time and society and pertained to all sectors of human life, known as well as yet to be known. He offered a universal ideology and laid down norms and laws accordingly. This system forms the common heritage of the entire humanity and is accessible to everyone who seeks its. Following are some of the successful principles that he laid down for the humanity which kindle our path in today's adult and mature age of 21st century.

- Standardised weight and measures.
- The prices were regulated.
- Monopoly trade practices were curbed.
- Hoarding of goods was declared illegal, future trading was prohibited.
- Usury business was banned and declared unlawful and sin.
- Wine, (Liquor) trade and consumption was banned.
- Gambling business was declared unlawful and banned.
- Prostitution was banned and declared unlawful.

The Prophet (s) personally used to give surprise visits, once he found a trader had put dry grains on the wet grains. Prophet (s) put the hand inside the heap of food grains to check adulteration and noticed that he had done this to cheat buyers. He asked the trader *'Why did you do this?'* the trader replied it is due to rain." Then Prophet (s) said, *"He is not amongst us who cheats others."*

The Prophet (s) was very keen on cleanliness; he always exhorted his companions to keep their courtyard and market place clean. He prohibited sitting on the road side and chatting.

The Prophet (s) appointed male and female inspectors for tax collection and inspection; strict punishments were implemented for the law breakers.

Male Inspectors

The Prophet (s) had appointed inspectors and tax collectors comprised of men and women. The prominent men were Sa'ed (r), son of Al-Aas (r), Abdullah (r), son of Sa'ed and Umar (r).

Female Inspectors

Among women, the prominent inspectors were Samra (r), daughter of Mahraba and Shifa (r), daughter of Abdullah. Prophet Muhammad (s) had made, the first learned lady of Islam, Shifa (r), daughter of Abdullah, as inspector and custom officer of Medina market; it was possibly for the supervision of trading commodities brought to the market by women traders.

Male Traders

Abu Bakr (r), the first caliph of the Islamic common wealth had a cloth business, Umar (r), the commander of Muslims and conqueror of the Persian and Byzantine (Rome) empires, used to trade in corn, Uthman (r), and Abdul Rahman (r) Bin Awf, were leading cloth business merchants.

Other Companions of the Prophet (s) were engaged in different occupations, including weaving, carpentry, farming, gardening, and tailoring.

Female Traders

Among female traders were, Asma (r), daughter of Marhaba, Khawla daughter of Suaib and Malika Ume Saib are famous.

Trade

The Quran gives a momentum to take up trade;

There is no sin on you to seek wealth from your Lord." – "Spread over the globe and seek the bounties of God. (Quran, 62 : 60)

God made trade lawful and usury unlawful.

(Quran, 2 : 275)

A Trader

The honesty, fairness and straightforwardness with which Muhammad (s) did his business dealings with the people have become an everlasting example for all businessmen to follow.

Muhammad's (s) following comments will ever remain a

golden rule for all honest and hardworking businessmen.

"Trying to earn a lawful livelihood is an obligatory duty in addition to other duties which are obligatory."

"The truthful and trustworthy merchant is associated with the prophets, the upright and the martyr."

"God shows Mercy to a man who is kindly when he sells, when he buys and when he makes a claim."

"A country will gain more from prosperous trade than from the muscle power of war."

"Dishonest dealers are sure to fail in the long run and honest dealers to succeed."

Trade Agreements

Before the establishment of the Islamic state in Medina, the security of the trading caravan was the biggest issue. The Prophet (s) evolved the system of security for trading caravans. To make trade and commerce more secure, he introduced writing of agreements with proper system of witness.

The Quran specifically advises people to put in writing all commercial transactions, especially when the payment or the delivery of goods is deferred. The Quran mentions this in these words:

O believers when you contract a debt for a fixed term, you should put it in writing And let two men from among you bear witness to all the documents.... (Pl ref Quran, 2 : 282)

The contract (*al-Ahd*) was to become central in Islam, from marriage contracts to social or commercial contracts and those drawn up to settle conflict or war situations. The Quran states the importance of contract and the need to stand by their conditions: *"For every engagement will be inquired into."* (Quran, 17 : 34)

The Prophet (s) said in this respect:

"Muslims must stand by the terms of their contracts."

Foreign Exchange

Muhammad (s) was the pioneer in introducing international trade laws. During his period, a system of foreign exchange developed. Later, Muslim rulers introduced 'Sakka' (a promissory note for international trade), the Arabic 'Sakka' later became 'Cheque.'

Military Administration

Of the many measures that were taken initially in many branches of life, one was aimed at setting up an administrative system for the army. Muhammad (s) selected the required number of soldiers and sent them out on various military campaigns.

Permanent Army

Muslim soldiers with inadequate means were subsidized by the state so that the effectiveness of the army might be enhanced.

Physical Fitness and Defense Training

Military training was declared compulsory and a suitable system for training was devised by the Prophet (s). For example, he always exhorted people to remain physically fit through exercises. He encouraged the practice of archery. He personally

attended such competitions at a ground called *Al-Sibaq*. He encouraged racing - horses, camels and men - and also patronized wrestling and swimming competitions. On all such occasions, the Prophet (s) distributed prizes. A mosque called *Masjid Al-Sibaq* still survives near the northern gate of Medina. The word *Al-Sibaq* means 'to win in a competition'. It is said that the Prophet (s) used to stand on a high place near the mountain and watch horses winning a race and securing the first three places. *Al-Maqrizi* has recorded that the first five horses (winners) used to be awarded prize in the shape of dates or other items.

Simultaneously, a system was set in motion to collect arms under the auspices of the government. This involved buying of equipment, horses, camels, and their maintenance in state grazing grounds.

Intelligence Organization of Patrol

Medina was practically a small Islamic state and Muhammad (s) was its first leader and ruler, but it was surrounded by enemies who wanted to destroy it before it could gain any strength and establish its authority in the land. Muhammad (s), therefore, organized a system of patrols to keep him informed of the enemy position, their movements, their plans, designs and their strength in arms, materials, provisions, etc.,

Patrolling system helped to establish a strong system of communication which kept Muhammad (s) informed of all events happening in the surrounding tribes and border areas of Medina. He also organized a system of observation posts, whenever needed, for the defense of the city of Medina. Training was also given to the Muslim soldiers in military terms, secret signs, passwords and code words. The Prophet (s) used to have more than one channel to gather intelligence.

Ministry of Finance

'*Baitulmal*' – The National Treasury

In an Islamic state of Medina, Muslims used to pay tax *Zakat*, collectively at '*Baitulmal*' (the house of currency). This *Zakat* amount is used to fund the state, its endeavors to support the poor and the needy.

Zakat, the largest source of revenue, was made obligatory. Every man of means had to pay this tax. The tariff, however, varied from one category of property to another. Agricultural produce, for instance, was taxed at 10 per cent, whereas a trader had pay 2.5% of his capital. If someone owned mines of iron, gold, or silver, he also had to pay a certain share to the state. Revenue officers were sent outside Medina to collect *Zakat* from all territories. Later, local collectors were appointed.

For the huge expenditure of the Battle of Tabuk, Muhammad (s) appealed for special funds; The Prophet (s) ordered his companions to pay *Zakat* in advance, hence for the first time '*Advance Zakat*' or '*Advance tax*' was collected.

Muhammad (s) had also appointed clerks to maintain the income and expenditure of *Baitulmal*, the National treasury.

The income of the state had to be supervised. This task was assigned to Bilal (r) who was both a Minister of Finance and the Caller to Prayer. A room in the Prophet's Mosque was assigned to the treasury '*Baitulmal*'. State money, state property documents and treaty documents were kept safe in that locked room.

Pension and Compensation System

Prophet Muhammad (s) had introduced a pension system for the destitute and poor people of the Islamic state. There was a Jewish tribe by the name of Banu 'Arid in Medina. The Prophet (s) had been pleased with them and had fixed an annual remuneration for them. He also introduced compensation system (Insurance) for the people who die un-natural deaths.

External Affairs

The Islamic state of Medina enjoyed such power and recognition that in the 9th year of *Hijrah* itself, 38 kings, tribe leaders and envoys from all over the Arab Peninsula and foreign countries came to draw up alliances or sign covenants. Other envoys from Jewish or Christian tribes also came to Prophet Muhammad (s); he drew up an assistance pact with them.


Non - Muslim Ambassadors

Highly intellectual and expert companions became ambassadors. It is significant that the Prophet (s) also sent out non-Muslims as ambassadors, possibly because of their trustworthiness and their personal talents for the job. Amr, son of Umayya, a non-Muslim, for example, was sent as an envoy to the king of Abyssinia.

Judicial Administration

A system of much needed judicial administration was also set up by the Prophet (s). In the beginning, the number of Muslims

did not exceed a few hundred. All of them lived in the city of Medina. There was hardly any question of dispute among Muslims but in case, one arose, the people concerned referred it to the tribal leader or to the Prophet (s). The case was decided quickly and the decision was implemented. People had the right to approach the highest judicial authority of the land, the Prophet (s), and seek redress of their grievances.





‘Justice for All’

Prophet Muhammad (s), in his capacity as the Supreme Judge of the Islamic state of Medina, was the greatest administrator of justice. He judged all cases, irrespective of race, creed or relationship, with equity and justice and never distinguished between friend and foe. The Quran proclaimed,

O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives, and whether it be (again) rich or poor. (Quran, 4 : 135)

The Prophet (s) judged each case on its merits and set an eternal example of justice and impartiality for all. The legal cases judged by him throw immense light on the nature, quality and comprehensiveness of his vision in legal matters.

❶ Abdullah bin Sehi was sent to Khaybar to collect a share of the product from the Jews. He was murdered and his body was found by his cousin Muheesah, who went to the Prophet (s) and appealed for revenge against the Jews. The Prophet (s) asked, “*Can you swear that he was killed by the Jews?*” He replied that he had not seen the murder with his own eyes. The Prophet (s) said that the Jews should be asked to take an oath. Muheesah

said, "How can we trust their oath? They will take false oaths a hundred times." There was no one else living in Khaybar except the Jews and it was indisputably one of the Jews who had killed Abdullah. But as there was no eye-witness, the Prophet did not ask anything of the Jews and paid the compensation (i.e., blood-money) from the state treasury.

● "A woman belonging to the tribe of Maqsuma was caught stealing. The Quraysh found it embarrassing that she was to be meted out the Islamic punishment. They wanted somebody to intercede with Prophet Muhammad (s) on her behalf. They thought Osama, a young man much loved by the Prophet (s), would be the best to intercede on their behalf so that the lady could be exempted from punishment. When Osama broached the matter with the Prophet, his countenance turned grim. He asked him how they could dare interfere with God's wishes. Many earlier communities before them had perished because they were guilty of punishing their offenders who were poor and allowing the rich to go scot-free. The Prophet (s) said if it were Fatima (r), daughter of Muhammad (s) who stole, he would have amputated her hand, he told the crowd.

● According to Tariq Muharbi, Prophet Muhammad (s) was delivering a sermon and an Ansari (a Medina Muslim), seeing the tribe of Bani Thalabah in the Medina mosque, stood up and said, "O Messenger of God! These people belong to the tribe of Bani Thalabah. Their ancestor killed a member of our family. We appeal to you to get one of their men hanged in exchange for that." The Prophet (s) replied, "The revenge of the father cannot be taken on his son." Prophet Muhammad (s) proved by his example that no one could be more firm for justice than him, even if it were against his personal interest or the interest of those who were near and dear to him. He decided every case brought to him by friend or foe with justice. He favored neither the rich nor the poor, but decided their cases

with equality and justice. He decided the cases even of his enemies with strict justice and fairness. Both non-Muslims and Muslims brought their disputes to him without any fear or hesitation for they knew that they would get justice only from him.

- Once a Jew of the Banu Quraiza tribe was killed by a Jew of the Banu Nadir tribe. When the complaint came before the Prophet (s), he enforced the law of the 'Torah – a life for a life.' According to the Jewish Law, implemented in war and victory situations, stated: *"And when the Lord your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to the sword; but the women and the little ones, the cattle, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves"* (Deuteronomy 20:13-14). In disputes between the Jews, Muslims and other tribes, the Prophet (s) was the final court of appeal.

- The Prophet (s) said,

"Judges are of three kinds, one kind in Paradise and two in Hell. One who recognizes truth, and gives a decree, accordingly is in Paradise. A man who recognizes truth but is unjust in decree is in Hell, and a man who passes a decree for the people out of ignorance is in Hell."

- The Prophet (s) said:

"A judge shall not deliver his verdict when he is in a bad temper."



The Ruler and the Common Man are equal before Islamic Law

Islamic Law admits of no exemption in favour of the head of Islamic state. The Caliph or Ruler of Islamic state and the common man are equal before the Islamic law. It is reported that Caliph Ali (r) once lost his armour. After a few days he happened to see it with a Christian. He filed a complaint in the court of Justice Shurayh, who summoned the Christian. The Christian claimed that the armour belonged to him. Justice Shurayh asked Ali (r) if he had any proof or evidence in support of his claim, to which he replied in the negative. The Judge gave the verdict in favour of the Christian and dismissed the Caliph Ali's (r) petition. The Christian was so overwhelmed by this exemplary show of justice (on the basis of available evidence) that he announced his decision to embrace Islam and exclaimed, "this is like the justice of the Prophets, that the ruler presents me before a city magistrate (who is subordinate to him), and the magistrate gives his verdict against the ruler!"

In Islamic society, the judiciary is independent of the ruling establishment. The judge is required to implement the provisions of Islamic Law (*Shariah*) without fear or favour, and in the discharge of his obligations he is accountable, not to the

powers that be, but only to Almighty God. An independent judiciary played a crucial role in ensuring compliance with Islamic law on the part of the ruling establishment as well as the general public.

Jabala al- Ghassani, the King of a tribe from Syria, was performing the *Hajj* pilgrimage when his mantle accidentally fell under the feet of an Arab tribesman. Enraged, Jabala struck him a blow in the face. The Bedouin complained to Caliph Umar (r), who summoned Jabala and told the Bedouin tribesman to return the blow. "How can that be possible," asked an astonished King Jabala. "He is an ordinary man and I am a King". Umar (r) replied, "Islam has made you one with him and you have no superiority over him except in piety and good deeds."



Sorrow over his Son's Demise

During the tenth year of *Hijrah*, towards the end of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) life, the religion of the One God was being established all over the Arab Peninsula, with animosity towards Islam constantly diminishing and the number of conversions to increasing.

Prophet Muhammad's (s) wife Mariah bore him a beautiful son and the Prophet (s) named him Ibrahim, and he expressed particular joy at the news of the child's arrival. He organized a meal in celebration. He would take the child on his lap and play with him lovingly.

Young Ibrahim who was then about a year and a half old fell seriously ill. The Prophet (s) saw his only son about to leave life and to leave him. Every day, he spent hours by his son's side. When the child eventually breathed his last, the Prophet (s) wept on the death of his only son as any father would; he took his son in his arms and held him against his breast, tears' streaming down his face, so deep was his sorrow. His heart was torn apart by the new tragedy, and his face mirrored his inner pain. Abd Ar-Rahman (r), his faithful Companion, was surprised by those sobs, because he thought that the Prophet (s) had previously forbidden such expressions of grief. At first,

Prophet Muhammad (s) could not speak: then he explained to him that he had forbidden excessive manifestations of distress, or hysterical behavior, but not the natural expression of sorrow and suffering. Then he gave verbal expression to his grief that, in effect, became a spiritual teaching, as he declared that his tears were "signs of tenderness and mercy." He added a comment springing from his own experience, but which was also true in every Muslim's daily life: *"He who is not merciful will not be shown mercy."* In the difficult moments of life, kindness, compassion, mercy, and the expressions of understanding that human beings offer one another bring them closer to the One God, Ar-Rahman (the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). Through them, God reaches closer to the believer's heart, offering the believer what the believer him or her has offered to a brother or sister in humanity.

Prophet Muhammad (s) was personally affected, and he did not hesitate to show and express his grief. He added: *"The eye shed tears, O Ibrahim, the heart is infinitely sad, and one must only utter what satisfies God."* God had once more tested him through his sensitivity and his mission. He had lost so many loved ones – companions, his wife Khadijah (r), three of his daughters, and his three sons. In his lifetime, he had seen sorrow, but he remained both gentle with his heart and firm in his mission.



Eclipse

A few hours after Prophet Muhammad's (s) return from the graveyard, an eclipse of the sun occurred. The Muslims were quick to associate the eclipse with the death of the Prophet's (s) child and saw it as a miracle, a kind of message from God to His Prophet (s). But Prophet Muhammad (s) put an end to all such interpretations, saying forcefully: *"The sun and the moon are two of God's signs. Their light does not darken for anyone's death."* Prophet Muhammad (s) was thus reminding his Companions of the order of things and of the necessity to make no mistake in interpreting signs, in order to avoid falling into superstition. This was, for them as well as for himself, a spiritual teaching in restraint and humility: human beings, the Muslims among them, had to learn how to depart, and see their loved ones depart. The trial of faith and of humanity which made the Prophet (s), shed tears consisted precisely in learning how to find, at the heart of the eternity of creation and of never ending cycles, the strength to face sudden departures and death. The sign of Almighty God's presence at the time of a person's death lies not in the occurrence of any miracle, but rather in the permanence of the natural order, in the eternity of His creation.

27

The Farewell Pilgrimage

During the month of Ramadan of that tenth year, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) received another sign from God. Prophet Muhammad (s) told his daughter Fatimah (r) about it: *"Each year, the Angel Gabriel recites the Quran to me once, and I recite it to him once; but this year, he has recited it twice, and I think this announces my hour."* Hajj (the major pilgrimage) is the fifth pillar of Islam. Every Muslim must go to Makkah at least once in her or his life during specific days of the month of *Dhu al-Hajjah*. This had not yet been accomplished by the Prophet (s), and the time to prepare for it was approaching. It was widely announced that the Prophet (s) would lead the next pilgrimage to Makkah, and in the following weeks, he set out leading thirty thousand pilgrims from Medina, who were joined by three times as many from all over the Arab Peninsula.

While they were on the road, the Prophet (s) received an important Revelation about Makkah and particularly the rites near the Kaabah, which consisted of the first verses of chapter - 9 (the only chapter in the Quran that does not begin with the ritual formula "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, and the most Merciful"). First, the verse announced most clearly that the rites (based on ignorance) formerly performed around

the Kaabah (where some pilgrims went naked) would no longer be tolerated and that idol worshippers would not be allowed.

The message was firm and established that the Kaabah, the sacred mosque, was now exclusively devoted to the worship of the One God, and that only Muslims could enter it. The verse reads, *"The Mosques of God shall only be visited and maintained by those who believe in God and the Last Day, establish regular prayers, pay Zakat, and fear none but God. For those, it may be that they are of the rightly guided."* Most of the companions, and scholars after them, understood this prohibition to apply only to the sacred perimeter in Makkah, not to other mosques where non-Muslims could also enter. What the message conveyed was the clear establishment of the worship of the One God (*Tawhid*).

Once in Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (s) performed the various rites of the pilgrimage, explaining to the companions who were with him that they were thus reviving their father Abraham's (a.s) pure, monotheistic worship. The pilgrimage, like the Prophet's (s) entire life, was a return to the source, to the origin: a return to God, the One God, in the footsteps of his Prophet Abraham (a.s), who had first built the Kaabah, the House of God, to worship the One God. The companions observed every gesture done by the Prophet (s), who was in effect most precisely establishing the ritual of pilgrimage: he had told them, *"Take your rites from me"*. On the ninth day of *Dhu al-Hijah*, in the tenth year of *Hijrah*, the Prophet (s) addressed 1,44,000 pilgrims on the Mount of Mercy (*Jabal ar-rahmah*) surrounded on all sides by the valley called *Arafah*, (20 km from Makkah). It is the central point of the pilgrimage. He spoke in short portions and men around him repeated his words so that everyone throughout the valley could hear his speech.

Farewell Sermon

The last sermon was delivered in 632 C.E, in the tenth year of *Hijrah*, at Mount Arafat in Makkah on the occasion of the annual rites of *Hajj* (the *pilgrimage*). The content of the message was powerful and intense, and Prophet Muhammad (s) began by stating that he did not know whether he would again meet the pilgrims in this place after this year. Then he reminded them of the sacred character of the place and month, as well as of that of their lives, their honor, and their belongings. He explained that the period of ignorance had come to an end, and so had its practices, its rivalries, and its conflicts based on power and profit. Henceforth, all Muslims were united by faith, fraternity, and love, which were to transform them into witnesses of Islam's message. They must under no circumstances accept being "*either oppressors or oppressed.*" They were to learn of the equality of all people in front of God and the necessary humility because "*you all descend from Adam, and Adam was created from clay. The most noble in the sight of God is the most pious.*"

Prophet Muhammad (s) said: "*No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, except by their intimate consciousness of God {Piety}.*" The Prophet (s) reminded all the Muslims to treat their wives gently and added: "*Be intimately conscious of God as regards women, and strive to be good to them.*" Then he added, as if to show the way and its conditions to all the faithful present and all those who were to follow his teachings through the ages: "*I have left among you what will, if you keep to it firmly, preserve you from error: clear guidance, the Book of God (Quran) and His Prophet's (s) tradition. (Hadith)*"

The Prophet (s) ended his brief sermon with an earnest question: "*O people, have I faithfully conveyed the Message? A*

powerful murmur of assent, "O God, yea!" arose from thousands of the pilgrims gathered in the valley. The Prophet (s) raised his forefinger and said: "O God, be my witness! At the end of the sermon, the pilgrims answered: *We bear witness that you have faithfully conveyed the message, that you have fulfilled your mission, and that you have given your community good advice.*" Then the Prophet (s) concluded: "O God, be my witness!... And let whoever is present convey this message to whoever is absent."

Prophet Muhammad (s) was indeed a witness in front of the spiritual community of Muslims. In the spiritual union with them, at the heart of the pilgrimage - which itself requires simplicity and the unity of human beings before their Creator Almighty Allah, the Messenger recalled the essential point in God's message: the absolute equality of human beings before God, regardless of race, social class, or gender. The only thing that distinguishes them lies in what they do with themselves, with their intelligence, their qualities, and most of all their heart. Wherever they come from, whether they are Arabs or not; whether black or white, rich or poor, men or women, human beings stand out by their spiritual education, control of their ego, blossoming of faith, dignity, goodness and nobility of the soul. In front of thousands of pilgrims of all origins, slaves as well as tribal chiefs, men as well as women, Prophet Muhammad (s) bore witness that he had fulfilled his mission in the light of God's message, and all the believers testified with one voice that they had received and understood its meaning and contents.

A few hours later, Prophet Muhammad (s) received a Revelation of the verse that confirmed that his mission was nearing its end:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (Quran, 5 : 3)

The last cycle of Prophethood was drawing to its close, and the Messenger was to return to his home beyond this life, in proximity to the One God.

‘ O Transformer of Hearts . . . ’

All those non-Muslims: some were searching for peace, truth and sincerity, some were still not convinced of the truthfulness of his message, while they all experienced a new form of inner conflict that required effort and patience. The Prophet (s) advised them to observe signs of God and seek help and guidance from God to find the light of Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (s) taught Muslims—those who had recognized the presence of the One God—to carry on their inner struggle, to remain humble and aware of their fragility, to seek to derive spiritual nourishment from *Zhikr* (the remembrance of God), and, as the Quran recommended to ask God to keep their hearts firm: *“Our Lord! Do not cause our heart to stray after You have guided us.”* The Prophet (s) used to pray to God and say, *“O Transformer of Hearts, keep my heart firm in Your religion!”*

28

In Paradise : In Supreme Union

The celebration of *Hajj* was over. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had performed all the rites and wanted to return to Medina, so he set out with the pilgrims who had come with him. They at last reached Medina and life resumed its course.

Many Muslims taught or learned the principles of Islam and the Quran, as well as the elements of religious practice with their rules and conditions. The *Zakat* (*Zakat* means: purifying one's wealth to gain God's blessing to make it grow in goodness), was collected according to the norms that had recently been established by revelation and the Prophet's (s) practice.

Thus, all the rites of the five pillars of Islam (*Arkan al-Islam*) had been codified, including pilgrimage, which had just been completed, and the Muslim community had received the principles necessary to live Islam in their daily lives.

Illness

A few weeks after the month of Ramadan in the 11th year of *Hijrah*, Prophet Muhammad (s) went to Uhud, where the second battle between the Muslims and the Quraysh had taken place, and he performed a farewell prayer for the men who had been killed there.

He then went back to the Medina mosque, sat on the *mimbar* (An elevated chair from which the imam addresses the faithful in a mosque), and addressed the faithful Muslim companions. First he said,

" I am going ahead of you (in the hereafter) and I shall be a witness over you. "

Then he advised them, concluding his speech by saying,

" I do not fear your reverting to polytheism after me, but I fear you will quarrel over the riches of this world. "

Those words clearly expressed that he felt he must get ready to leave this life. In the same breath, he expressed a fear for the future of his spiritual community: Faith would not leave them, he said, but the world with its illusions would colonize them, and both would, unfortunately, co-exist within them.

Prophet Muhammad (s) was in effect expressing a fear that sounded like a prediction. They would continue to pray to God, but they would be divided because of honors, wealth, power, or their different affiliations which would make them forget the fraternity that united them.

In the night following that day, the Prophet (s) went to the *Al-Baqi* graveyard, in Medina, to greet those buried there, and he punctuated his invocations with the words: "*You are the first (you went ahead) and we are coming after you (we are joining you).*" On the way back, the Prophet (s) experienced severe headache which did not leave him for almost two weeks and kept him confined to bed during the last days of his life. At first, he continued to lead the congregational prayer, in spite of the headache and fever. As the days went on, the illness grew worse, and the Prophet (s) had to lie down for longer periods of time.

He had been staying with Aishah (r) for a few days when his fever increased and he fainted. When he recovered, he requested that seven skins of water (water was stored in containers made from skin of animals) be poured over his face. After a few hours, he felt a little better and decided to go the mosque with a bandage around his head. He sat on the *mimbar*, addressed the faithful companions present, and spoke to them about graves, insisting that they must never turn his own grave into a place of worship. He added "*Do not commit acts of idolatry on my grave.*"

He was the Messenger, but he remained a man, he knew how deep his companions' love for him was, and he warned them against committing the mistakes of those who had come before them, and had idealized their Prophets to the point of worship.

This injunction never to lapse into the worship of human beings explains why Prophets cannot be represented in classical Islamic traditions, pictures, or as carved statues. One should follow the Prophets teaching and not to worship their persons: they are paths that guide people and bring them closer to God. Only God is worthy of worship.

The Prophet (s) then rose and asked whether he owed any of his companions anything, did he have an unsettled debt? Had he offended or hurt anybody? If so, that person should speak out so that the situation could be settled. A man stood up and reminded the Prophet (s) that he owed him three dirham's: The Prophet (s) ordered that, *'The money be given back to him immediately'*.

Prophet Muhammad (s), following the injunctions of the revelation of the Quran did not perform the funeral prayer of any Muslim – until all his earthly debts were settled. He had to depart debtless, free from owing anything to any other person, taking with him no unforgiving offense, no unhealed wound, and no unheard message.

The Prophet (s) sat on the *Mimber* again and confessed: *"Almighty God, the most Noble, has offered one of His servants the chance to choose between the possessions of this world and that which is near Him, and he has chosen that which is near God."* At those words, Abu Bakr (r) burst into tears, for he had been the first to understand, from the depths of his love for the Prophet (s) that Muhammad (s) was speaking of himself and of his own awaiting departure. The Prophet (s) pacified him and while continuing to address the congregation, directly and personally addressed Abu Bakr's (r) heart, in this manner: *"The Companion who has been the most generous to me with his company and his wealth is Abu Bakr. If I were to have an intimate friend besides God, he would be Abu Bakr; but Islamic brotherhood and affection are preferable."*

Departing

Then Prophet Muhammad (s) went back to Aishah's (r) house and lay down again. He gave a few more recommendations about faith, practice, and maintaining of the Kaabah. Then he wanted

to go to the mosque, but the pain was so intense that when he tried to get up, he fainted. When he recovered, he asked if the Muslims have prayed, and Aishah (r) informed him that they were waiting for him. He again tried to get up, but fainted once more. When he recovered consciousness for the second time, he asked the same question and was informed that the Muslims were still waiting for him. He told Aishah (r) to see to it that the people prayed, and that Abu Bakr (r) was to lead the prayer.

Prophet Muhammad (s) told her this during the following days as well, but every time he did, Aishah (r) requested that her father Abu Bakr (r) be exempted from leading the prayer. She insisted that he was too sensitive and that he wept when reciting the Quran. Each time she objected, Aishah (r) received the same firm and determined answer, Abu Bakr (r) must lead the congregational prayer. Two days later, when his illness allowed him some respite, he was able to go to the mosque while the Muslims were praying *Zuhr* (the noon prayer) behind Abu Bakr (r). Abu Bakr (r) wanted to step back and leave his place to the Prophet (s), but the latter prevented him from doing so and merely sat on his left. The Prophet (s) led the rest of the prayer, while Abu Bakr (r) repeated, in a louder voice, the phrases that accompanied the different movements.

This was the Prophet's (s) last appearance in the mosque. During the day that followed, he had all his belongings distributed, down to his last dirham and his coat of mail, and he continued to give out some advice; he repeated again and again that slaves, the poor, and the lowly must be treated well. The next morning, a Monday, at the time of dawn prayer, the Prophet (s) raised a curtain in Aishah's (r) dwelling, enabling him to look at the Muslims in the mosque, and he smiled. The Muslims were surprised and happy at that gesture and thought that the Prophet (s) was going to join them, but the curtain went down again and the Prophet (s) did not reappear. During the hours that followed, Fatimah (r), his daughter, came to visit him and

made a compassionate remark about the intensity of the Prophet's (s) suffering. At this, Prophet (s) told her: *"After this day, there will be no more suffering for your father."* He also whispered into her ear, that she would soon join him, and this made her smile through her tears. The pain was getting more and more intense, and the Prophet (s) was soon unable to speak.

Then Aishah (r) came to sit by the Prophet's (s) side, pressed him against her, and laid his head on her lap while stroking his head to reduce the pain.

Prophet Muhammad (s) closed his eyes. Aishah (r) was holding him against her, and she heard him whisper, *"In Paradise, in Supreme union..."* Then he recited the end of the verse, *"In the company of those on who is the Grace of God – the Prophets (peace be upon them all), the sincere, the martyrs, and the righteous; how beautiful is their company!"* He again repeated three times, *"In Supreme union!"* His forearm suddenly sank down and his head became heavier, and Aishah (r) understood that the Prophet (s) had just breathed his last.

Prophet Muhammad (s) departed on June 8, 632 C.E, (Age 63), {Monday, 12th Rabi' al-Awwal, Year 11 Hijrah.}, to join his Lord, his Educator, his Friend, who had called him back to Himself at last, to let him find ultimate peace, beyond the world of human beings to whom he had been sent to bring the final message from the Most Gracious. Since that day, the spiritual Muslim community has never stopped, all over the world and through the ages, to salute the last Prophet (s) and recite, with all their heart and love:

*God and His angels send blessing on the Prophet
O you who believe! Send blessings on him, and salute
him with all respect. (Quran, 33 : 56)*

Love and Emptiness

The news of Prophet Muhammad's (s) demise spread through Medina and caused infinite endless sorrow. Faces showed dismay and tears flowed. The Prophet (s) had recommended that grief should be expressed, but without hysteria, with restraint and dignity. There was heavy silence, reined near the Prophet's (s) home.

Umar (r) suddenly broke that silence and exclaimed forcefully that the Prophet (s) was not dead, that he would come back. He even threatened to kill whoever dared declare that the Prophet (s) was dead. His love was such, and the feeling of emptiness was so intense, that Umar (r) could not imagine the future without the man who had guided and accompanied them, and whose love and attention had been stressed by the Quran itself: *"Now a Prophet has come to you among yourselves: it grieves him that you should suffer, he is ardently anxious over you, to the believers he is most kind and merciful."* (Quran, 9:128)

Emotion had taken hold of his being. At this point, Abu Bakr (r) arrived, sat at the Prophet's (s) bed side, and lifted the blanket that had been laid over the Prophet's (s) body and face. Tears were streaming down his face as he realized that the Prophet (s) had left them. He went out and tried to silence Umar (r), who, still in a state of emotional shock, refused to calm himself. Abu Bakr (r) then stood aside and addressed the crowd, this was when he uttered those words, full of wisdom, that produced the very essence of Islamic belief, "Let those who worshipped Prophet Muhammad (s) know that Prophet Muhammad (s) is now dead! As for those who worshipped Almighty God, let them know that God is alive and does not die." Then he recited this verse:

Muhammad is no more than a Prophet; many were the Prophets who passed away before him. If he died or was killed, will you then turn back? If any did turn back, not the least harm will do to God. But God will reward the thankful. (Quran, 3 : 144)

When Umar (r) heard that verse, he collapsed, and he was later to confess that it was as if he had heard the verse for the first time, even though it had been revealed a long before. He realized, along with all the Muslims, that the Prophet (s) had gone, that he had left them, and that the emptiness that had suddenly set in must henceforth be filled by their faith in the One God, who "is alive and does not die."; they must ask Him to help them find in themselves the strength, patience, and determination they needed to go on living without the Messenger, but always in the light of his example.

29

Messenger of God: An Excellent Example

The revelation of the Quran had apprised the Muslim companions, just as it tells Muslims today and for all eternity, throughout history and across manifold societies and cultures:

You have indeed in the Messenger of God an excellent example for him who hopes in [aspires to get close to] God and the Final Day and who remembers God intensely. (Quran, 33 : 21)

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is the master whose teachings one studies, the guide one follows on the way, the model one desire to emulate, and, above all, the elect whose sayings, silences and actions one is invited to ponder upon.

Throughout the Twenty-Three years of his mission, Muhammad (s) sought the way to spiritual freedom and liberation. He received revelation, step by step, in the middle of the circumstances of life, as if the Almighty God, the Most High was conversing with him in history, for eternity, forever. Prophet Muhammad (s) listened to God, spoke to Him, and believed His signs day and night, in the warm company of his

faithful companions in an Arabian desert.

He prayed while the world of humans was asleep, he prayed to God while his brothers and sisters despaired, and he remained patient and committed in the face of hardship and insult, while many persons turned away. His deep spirituality had freed him from the prison of the self, and he kept seeing and recalling the signs of the God, the Most Near, whether in a flying bird, a standing tree, falling darkness, or a shining star.

Prophet Muhammad (s) was able to express love and spread it around him. His wives were grateful by his presence, tenderness, affection, and his faithful companions loved him with an intense, profound, and extraordinarily generous love.

He gave and offered his presence, his smiles to his people, and if a slave happened to address him or wanted to take him to the other end of the city, he went, he listened, he loved. Belonging to God, he was nobody's possession; he simply offered his love to all. When he gave someone his hand, he was never the first to draw it back, and he knew what light and peace can surge in the heart of a being who is offered a tender word, an affectionate name and comfort. Freed from his own self, he neglected nobody. His presence was a refuge; he was the Messenger.

Prophet Muhammad (s) loved, he forgave. Every day he begged God to forgive his own failings and oversights, and when a woman or a man came to him burdened with a mistake, however serious, he received that soul and showed her or him the way to forgiveness, consolation, dialogue with Almighty God, and His protection.

He covered other people's mistakes from the sight of others, while teaching everyone the need for personal rigor and discipline. When laziness moved anyone to ask him for minimal practice, he always answered positively and invited people to

use their intelligence and their qualities to understand, improve, and free themselves from their own contradictions while accepting their own weakness. He taught responsibility without guilt and obedience to ethics as the conditions for freedom.

Justice is a condition for peace, and the Prophet (s) insisted that one cannot experience the taste of equity if one is unable to respect the dignity of others. He set slaves free and recommended that Muslims pledge to do so constantly: the faithful community of believers had to be a community of free beings.

The Revelation of the Quran showed the Prophet (s) the way, and, as we have seen, he gave particular attention to slaves, the poor, and the lowly in society. He invited them to assert their dignity, to demand their rights, and to get rid of any feeling of inferiority; the message was a call for religious, social, and political liberation.

At the close of the Prophet's (s) mission, in the plain lying at the foot of the Mount of Mercy (*Jabal ar-Rahmah*), men and women of all races, cultures, and colors, rich and poor, were present and listened to the Message of Islam, which stressed that the best among people are so through their hearts, which is determined neither by class nor by color or culture.

The Prophet (s) had once said, "*The best among you is the best toward people,*"

In the name of human brotherhood – addressing not just Muslims but all people (*an-nas*), as he did during the farewell sermon – he taught each conscience people to transcend the appearances that might hinder their progress toward the justice. In the presence of God, nothing could justify discrimination, social injustice, or racism. In the Muslim community, a black man called the believers to prayer, and a slave's son commanded the army; faith had freed the believers from judgments based

on misleading appearances.

Prophet Muhammad (s) had listened to women in his society, who often experienced denial of their rights, exclusion, and ill-treatment. The Quran recalls this listening and the accessibility of the Prophet (s):

God has indeed heard the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint to God. And God hears the argument between both of you. For God hears and sees [all things]. (Quran, 58 : 1)

Similarly, the Prophet (s) listened to a woman who wanted to divorce her husband because she did not like him anymore. He heard her, looked into the matter, and separated them.

Several women came to the Prophet (s) asking for divorce [*khula*] from their husbands for instance Jameela daughter of Ubayy, Habibah daughter of Sahil, Barirah, and Thabit son of Qays's wife. In this last case ibn Abbas recounts that Thabit's wife came to the Prophet (s) and told him that she had nothing to reproach her husband with as far as religion was concerned, but that she did not want to be guilty of infidelity regarding Islam (by failing to respect his rights as a husband or betraying him through her thoughts or behavior). The Prophet asked her whether she was willing to return the garden that he had given as a dowry, and she accepted this, the Prophet (s) then asked Thabit to accept the separation.

The Prophet (s) also received another woman who complained that her father had married her off without asking for her opinion. He was ready to separate her and her husband, but she informed him that she was actually satisfied with her father's choice but wanted to make it known "to fathers" that "this was not their decision" and that they could not act in such

a way without seeking their daughters' consent.

Prophet Muhammad (s) conveyed to women the twofold requirement of spiritual training and asserting a femininity that is not imprisoned in the mirror of men's gaze or separated within unhealthy relationships of power or seduction.

Women presence in society, in public space and in the social, political, economic, and even military spheres, was an objective fact that the Prophet (s) not only never denied or rejected but clearly encouraged.

In the light of spiritual teachings, he (s) guided women to assert themselves, be present, express themselves, and claim the real freedom of heart and principles of ethics. Women had to choose it by themselves and trace it out for themselves, trusting in the Almighty God, the Most Gracious.

Prophet Muhammad (s) loved children, with their innocence and gentleness. Being close to God and close to his own heart, he remained attentive to those who primarily understood the heart's language. He kissed children, carried them on his shoulders, and played with them, reaching toward their innocence, which, in its essence, is the expression of a permanent prayer to God. Children, like angels, belong wholly to God. They are signs. The Prophet Muhammad's (s) attitude was a constant reminder of this: thus, if his ritual prayer to God was disturbed by a baby crying – the infant, in effect, praying to God by invoking his or her mother – the Prophet (s) would then shorten his prayer as if to respond to the child's prayer.

"Sometimes", the Prophet had said, "I prepare for Prayer intending to make it last, but when [during prayer] I hear a child cry, I shorten it for fear of distressing child's mother."

The Messenger greatly appreciated children for their innocence. From them he learned to look at people and the world around him with wonder. From watching children experience beauty he also more fully developed his sense of aesthetics. In front of beauty, he wept he was moved and sometimes shed tears. He was often filled with well - being by the poetic musicality of a phrase or by the spiritual call of a verse from the Quran revealed by the Most Generous, the Infinitely Beautiful.

The light that Leads to Light

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) came to humankind with a message of faith, ethics, and hope, in which Almighty God reminds all people of His presence, His requirements, and the final Day of Return and Encounter. The Prophet Muhammad (s) came with this message. Throughout his life, he kept listening to women, children, men, slaves, rich, and poor, as well as outcasts. He listened to, welcomed, and comforted them. An elect among the population of this earth, he concealed neither his compassion, sympathy and nor kind heartedness.

Absolutely everything in Prophet Muhammad's (s) life was an instrument of renewal and transformation, from the slightest detail to the greatest events. The Muslim faithful as well as believers of any other faith, indeed all who study Prophet Muhammad's (s) life regardless of personal religious belief-can gain much from this, thus reaching towards the essence of the message and the light of faith.

The Prophet Muhammad (s) prayed, meditated, transformed himself, and transformed the world. Guided by Almighty God, his (*Rubb*) Educator, he offered the best in his being. Such was the meaning of Jihad, such was the meaning of

the injunction commanding believers to “*promote good and prevent evil.*” The Muhammad’s (s) life was a reflection of that teaching.

Prophet Muhammad’s (s) life journey exemplified at every stage an existence devoted to the worship of One God, Almighty Allah. Everybody loved, cherished, and respected the Prophet (s) because his demanding spirituality enabled him to rise above his ego, to give himself, and, in turn, to love without bondage. Divine Love is free from human dependence. He submitted and he was free: he submitted to God in the peace of the Divine, and he was free from the illusions of the human.

He had once told one of his Companions the secret of real love: “Keep away from [do not envy] what men love, and men will love you.” God had inspired him to follow the path of the Love: “My servant keeps getting closer to Me through freely chosen devotions until I love him; and when I love him, I am the hearing through which he hears, the sight through which he sees, the hand through which he holds, and the foot through which he walks.” God’s love offers the gift of nearness to the Divine and rising above of the self. God’s Love is a love without dependence, a Love that liberates and elevates.

Prophet Muhammad (s) followed a path that involved a number of different stages: the call to faith, exile, returns, and, finally, departure to the last refuge. All along the way, beginning with his initiation, God had accompanied and supported the Prophet (s) with His love, and He caused human beings to accompany him with their love as well.

The Prophet Muhammad (s) carried a universal message, both in the experience of love present throughout his life and in his reminder to people of the need to adhere to a universal ethics that transcends divisions, affiliations, and false identities. This was a true freedom – the freedom of a being who loves with justice and does not allow himself to be entrapped by

passions springing from race, nation, or tribe. His love illuminating his ethical sense made him good; his ethical sense guiding his love made him free. Profoundly good among men and extraordinarily free from them – such were two qualities that all Companions recognized in the last Prophet.

Prophet Muhammad (s) was beloved by God and an example among humans. He prayed, he contemplated, He loved, and he gave. He served, he transformed. The Prophet Muhammad (s) was 'the light that leads to Light', and in learning from his life, believers return to the source of Life and find His light, His warmth, and His love.

The Messenger Muhammad (s) may have left the human world, but he has taught us never to forget Him, the Supreme Refuge, the Witness, and the Most Near. Bearing witness that there is no god but God is, in effect, stepping towards deep and authentic freedom; recognizing Muhammad (s) as the Messenger is essentially learning to love him in his absence and to love Him in his presence. Loving, and learning to love: God, the Prophet (s), the creation, and humankind.



What Great People Say About Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)

In an American publication entitled *The Hundred*, the author mentions the one hundred people he believes to have exerted the greatest influence on human history. The author, Dr Michael Hart, was born into a Christian family, and received a scientific education. But at the top of his roll of honor he has placed neither Christ's name, nor Newton's. There was one person, he believes, whose achievements excelled all others: that person was the Prophet Muhammad (s). No one else has had such an impact on the history of man. He writes in the book "the 100." My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious level..... It is probable that the relative influence of Muhammad on Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus (a.s) Christ and St. Paul on Christianity..... It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history.

George Bernard Shaw writes in 'The Genuine Islam,' Vol. 1, No. 8.

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him - the wonderful man and in my opinion for from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity."

"If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it could be Islam."

La martin, a renowned Poet and Historian of France, in *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris 1854 Vol II, and pp. 276-77 writes:

"Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire - that is Muhammad (s). As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

M.K. Gandhi "Young India" 16th Sept. 1924. (17) Writes:

"I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind. I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the utter self effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, His intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. Those and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle."

Annie Besant, (prominent Theosophist, women's rights activist, writer and orator) in her book "The life and Teachings of Muhammad". Madras 1932, p 4, writes:

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great prophets of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yes I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."

Diwan Chand Sharma, in the book, The Prophets of the East, mentions:

"Muhammad was the soul of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him."


Napoleon Bonaparte, Paris (Emperor of France) Bonaparte et L' Islam". (17) Mentions:

"Moses had revealed the existence of God to his nation, Jesus (a.s) Christ to the Roman world, Muhammad to the old continent. Arabia was idolatrous when, six centuries after Jesus (a.s), Muhammad introduced the worship of the God of Abraham, of Ismael, of Moses, and of Jesus (a.s) - Muhammad declared that there was none but One God, Who had no father, no son and that the Trinity imported the idea of Idolatry..... I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Quran, which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness."



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This work is a comprehensive study of the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), whom Michael H. Hart has placed the first among the hundred best of the history for three reasons, for the outstanding results in the shortest time with the smallest means. He presented two revolutionary concepts, the unity of God and the unity of man for the purpose of a social order based on world brotherhood. The creed of certainty or Iman he preached to believe, the code of conduct or Islam he framed to observe, the cause to serve or Ehsan he propagated to follow, brought about a renaissance in the thought process of humanity. Islam which is the total surrender to the will of God demands loyalty only to God. Since God is the ultimate basis of all spiritual life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to loyalty to man's own ideal nature. In other words the spiritual life he preached was nothing but conscious rationality.

Entire life of the Prophet is an experiment in this pragmatic approach to face the challenges of life. He is supremely successful in establishing the faith of pure monotheism unsupported by any symbolisms or forms of appeal to the emotions of the common man. He evolved a culture based on equality, brotherhood, solidarity and freedom and also a State which was kingdom of God on earth. This work has thrown intensive light on all these aspects.

What is the most significant in this work are the analysis and the answers to quite a few misunderstandings that have arisen in the mind of modern man in respect of Islam. There are effective explanations in this work to such issues as Jibad, Hijab, Polygamy, Usury, Shariab, Mulla and Mujabideen.

Other misconceptions are there such as Muslims are radicals, fundamentalists, extremists and terrorists. Islam is under attack from different quarters. This work is the need of the hour. At a time when the west is attempting to acquire the economic resources of the Islamic world, when it is imposing its will and its culture on the crescent, and when it is justifying its aggression and exploitation by finding faults in Islamic institutions, this study has done yeoman service in removing the cobwebs that have shrouded around Islam by sketching at full length the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), by narrating what he preached, practiced and presented and by presenting Islam in its pristine purity.

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